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MARRIAGE IN MAY FAIR;

OR,

THE COMEDY OF REAL LIFE.

IN FIVE ACTS.

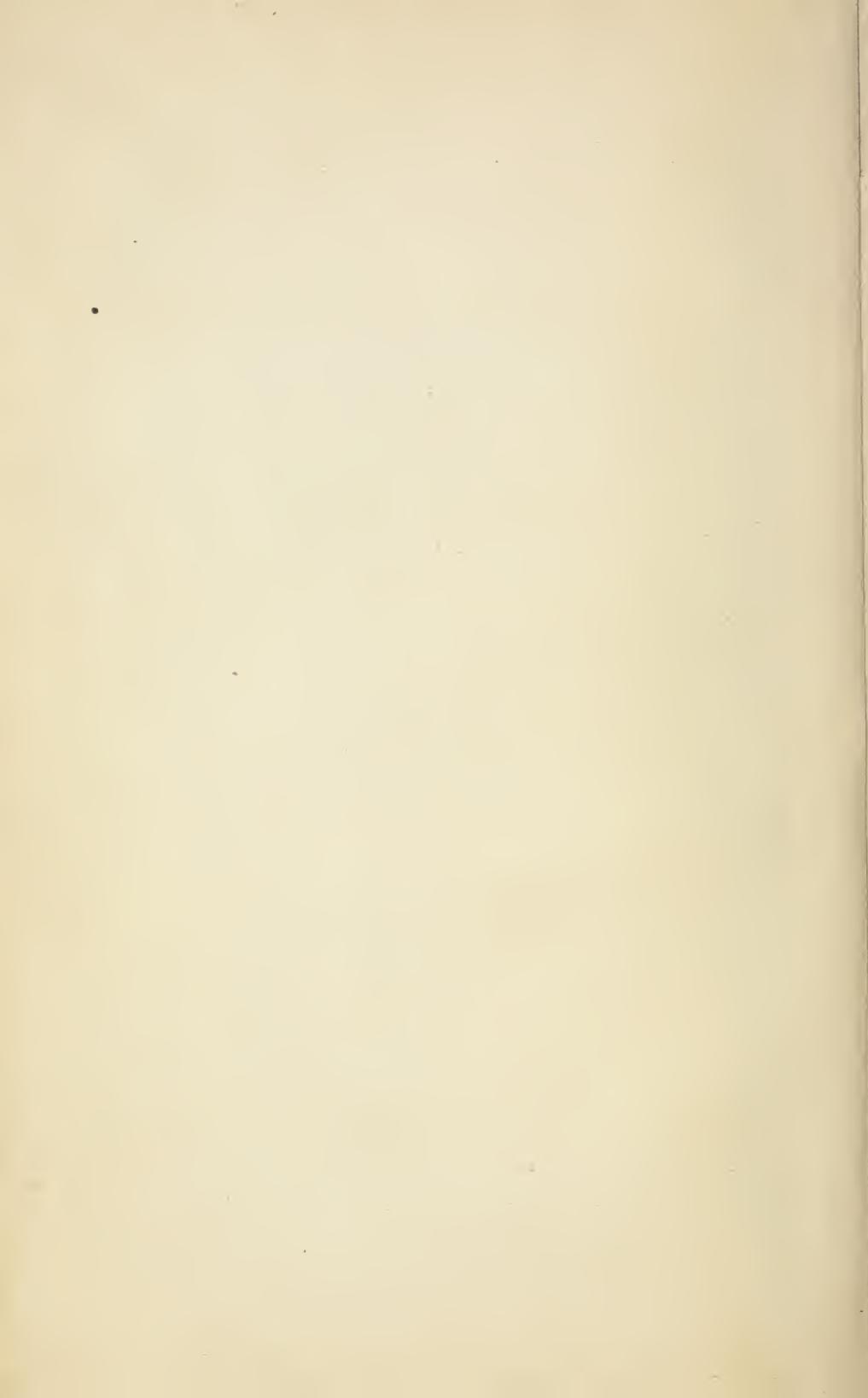
FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.

LONDON:

REYNELL AND WEIGHT, 16 LITTLE PULTENEY STREET.

1853.

Not published.



To Charles Ollier
with the sincere regards of
P. G. Potmore.

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DEDICATION.

TO

SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON, BART.

IN addressing this Comedy to the most accomplished writer and successful dramatist of our day, I must be permitted to plead the same excuse for venturing to do so, which (as I have stated elsewhere) has alone impelled me to its partial circulation, namely—the favourable opinions pronounced upon it by accredited and unbiassed judges of such matters. This, however, I should not have deemed a sufficient ground, of itself, for a step which partakes in some measure of a personal character, and therefore seems to ask a personal motive ; and such a motive I find in the ever-increasing gratitude and admiration that I feel for writings which, to my thinking, have done, and are doing, more to elevate and refine the general Intellect of the time, and thus to keep within just and safe limits the boasted “ March ” of that Intellect, than the literary productions of any other living writer.

P. G. PATMORE.

LONDON, NOVEMBER, 1853.

P R E F A C E.

ALTHOUGH the following comedy was of course constructed with an express view to the Stage, the existing appliances and means appertaining to any one of the theatres at present forming that Stage are so imperfectly adapted to its successful performance, that it must necessarily remain (for the present at all events) an unacted play ; and to ask *public* attention to a play so circumstanced would be at best useless.

On the other hand, the interest this comedy seems to have excited, not merely in the few literary friends who have read it, but in those professional quarters to which it was submitted anonymously, at a time when I had some thoughts of endeavouring to bring it on the stage, has tempted me to believe that it may be worth preserving from the accidents which attend a manuscript state. But I cannot persuade myself to print it, even for private circulation, without endeavouring to fortify myself in that step by citing two or three brief extracts from those critical opinions which have *alone* induced me to take it.*

As the only practical objection that has hitherto been urged against this Comedy as an *acting* play is, that its persons talk too much in proportion to the amount of action and incident in which they are engaged, I may perhaps be excused for citing

* See Note at the end of the Play.

an anecdote *apropos* to this point. It is related of one of the small wits of Sheridan's day, Jekyll, that, on first seeing the "School for Scandal" performed, at the end of the third Act he turned to a friend beside him, and said, "When will these ladies and gentlemen leave off talking and begin the Play?"

Now, considering that the comedy at which this "*hiss* by implication" was pointed was at that time, and remains to this day, the most successful ACTING Play that was ever put upon the modern Stage, the validity of the above criticism seems more than questionable.

In fact, it may be fairly doubted (and the practice of our most successful dramatists in this line seems to strengthen the doubt) whether incessant "Action—action—action" is not incompatible, not merely with unfailing point and brilliance of dialogue, but with a just, careful, and efficient development of character; which latter qualities are the marking features of Sheridan's two incomparable comedies, and of every successful one of the same or a similar type which has illustrated the stage of our own day, but especially of the *most* successful—those of Sir E. Bulwer Lytton and Douglas Jerrold. It is not indeed to be denied that rapid movement and profuse action are the elements most favourable to *popular* success, even in a drama of this class; but it may be questioned whether they are not to a great extent incompatible with a due acceptance and appreciation, on the part of the spectator, of those other and more intellectual elements the absence of which must be fatal to any attempt in the higher branches of Comedy.

As no name but mine can at present be connected with this Comedy, it seems proper to state that it is a joint production,—my share in it being confined, with trifling exceptions, to the Dialogue portion.

P. G. P.

Dramatis Personæ.

SIR FREDERICK FALKLAND.

SIR HARRY HEADLONG.

THE HON. CHARLES IDLETON.

CAPTAIN BELTON.

WILDGOOSE.

KNOWALL.

ISSACHAR (*a Jew Money-lender*).

TRUSTY (*Steward to Wildgoose*).

FRANK (*Valet to Wildgoose*).

TOM (*Groom to Wildgoose*).

Servants, &c.

LADY FALKLAND.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.

LOUISA (*Sister to Lady Falkland*).

EMMA BELTON (*Sister to Belton*).

MRS LAMODE (*a French Milliner*).

LUCY (*Lady Falkland's Maid*).

SCENE—LONDON.

MARRIAGE IN MAY FAIR.

A C T I.

SCENE—*A drawing-room in Sir Frederick Falkland's house.*

LADY FALKLAND and LOUISA.

LOUISA.—Nay, my dear sister, I'm sure there is something. You are not like yourself—you, who ought to be the happiest woman in the world—

LADY FALKLAND.—'Tis nothing, I tell you—nothing!

LOUISA.—Nay—I'm confident something has happened. You are restless—uneasy—

LADY FALKLAND (*pettishly*).—Uneasy!—ridiculous.

LOUISA.—Just so. We are always ridiculous when we make ourselves uneasy about what may be not worth a thought. (*Then, in a bantering tone.*) But come—unfold to me this heart-piercing grief, which has converted the once lively Caroline Falkland into a copy of the pretty clock-work figures one meets with at a county ball,—whose tongues strike “Yes” or “No” once in a quarter of an hour—like the dials on their chimney-pieces.

LADY FALKLAND.—Psha!

LOUISA (*in the same tone*).—Come, my dear Caroline, tell me—what is this mighty misfortune? Has your favourite, Maradan, played you false, and let Lady Modelove see her new spring importation first? or has Melnotte for once misfitted that most *mignon* of feet? or (worst of all!) is Nardin

laid up with a fit of the gout, and cannot dress you for the Drawing-room to-morrow?

LADY FALKLAND.—This trifling may be witty, Louisa, but it is not kind.

LOUISA.—Nay, my dear Caroline, pardon me, if—

LADY FALKLAND (*relenting*).—Rather pardon *me*, Louisa. But when one's temper is stung by disappointment, even the smile of affection is construed into the sneer of ridicule. The truth is, I *am* uneasy—very uneasy—

LOUISA.—Seriously, then—have I not reason to be surprised beyond measure at such a declaration from you—you—the very pet of fortune, and idol of the fashionable world—married to a man, young, handsome, accomplished, rich—the man of your choice—who adores you—

LADY FALKLAND.—Ah! my dear Louisa.

LOUISA.—Why surely that sigh is not a reproach to your husband's want of affection? You are silent. Is it possible that Sir Frederick Falkland—the most indulgent of husbands—whose every wish seems gratified when you are happy—who leaves your inclinations free as air, and never pesters you with impertinent inquiries of—where you have been—what you have done—whom you have seen—and so forth,—as some lordly brutes do—is it possible this dear, charming pattern of a husband can want the crowning virtue of all—affection?

LADY FALKLAND.—Perhaps in your opinion he may not.

LOUISA.—Why, is that a point on which women can materially differ?

LADY FALKLAND.—Ay—wonderfully! But come—let us hear how *you* sum up the proofs of a husband's affection.

LOUISA.—Why—let me see;—in the first place I would have him never fond of me before company, and never tired of me when we are alone together—never away when I have a right to expect him with me, and never with me when I want him to be away. I would have him never interfere with my

occupations and amusements while they do not interfere with his honour or peace of mind. I would have him see all my foibles, but never seem to see any of them. I would have him never reason with me without a smile of love on his lips—never out of temper, never jealous—

LADY FALKLAND.—Jealous!—ah, my dear sister!

LOUISA.—Why, surely Sir Frederick—

LADY FALKLAND.—My dear Louisa, hear me. I will no longer conceal from you the cause of my deep uneasiness. You have observed the marked attentions with which that profligate Belton is incessantly pestering me, and you know how much I detest them; yet my husband—

LOUISA.—Why, he is not jealous, I hope? Nay, then, indeed, Caroline, I see real cause for your uneasiness. But tell me—

LADY FALKLAND.—My dear Louisa, it is because my husband is *not* jealous that I am unhappy.

LOUISA.—Because he is *not* jealous!—ha, ha, ha! Excuse my laughing, Caroline. Because he is not jealous! Then, I suppose, you hold that suspicion is the surest proof of conjugal affection—that a man does not love his wife unless he locks her up—and that a good sound beating completes the beatitude of married life!

LADY FALKLAND.—Have done with this raillery, Louisa. I repeat to you—I cannot bear the indifference my husband seems to feel, now that I am wholly and irrevocably his; and it makes me the more unhappy, as I know it is not his natural temper.

LOUISA.—Oh—then he did oblige you by being jealous before marriage?

LADY FALKLAND.—It was his sensitive nature that endeared him to me. The anxiety with which he watched the increase of my affection for him, and the agonies he experienced from the least semblance of coquetry in my behaviour to others,

marked his mind as one congenial with my own. But, alas! marriage has changed all this; and now, he sees with the utmost unconcern a host of coxcombs flutter round me, and insult me with their odious gallantry before his face.

LOUISA.—Surely you wrong your husband.

LADY FALKLAND.—Ah!—that awful name of “husband!” He did not feel so happy and so secure when he was a lover.

LOUISA.—No;—nor ought he. But you would have him “husband” and “lover” too. No man has any right to feel perfectly secure of a woman’s heart till he has fairly won her hand. It therefore becomes every lover to be a *little* jealous. It is a lively “variation” to the somewhat monotonous *theme* of our English method of courtship. Jealousy is a testimonial to her attractions which every handsome woman has a right to exact *from her lover*; and she may fairly suspect the pretender who withholds that involuntary tribute to the supremacy of her charms. But jealousy in a *husband!*—be assured, Caroline, it denotes anything but true affection. No man ever loved the wife of whose faith he could feel the smallest doubt.

LADY FALKLAND.—Well, my dear sister, say what you will, I shall never be at peace till I see my husband jealous.

LOUISA.—And when you *do* see him jealous, I’ll answer for it you’ll never be at peace;—for, of all the torments of life, a husband jealous without cause must be at once the most intolerable and the most ridiculous.

LADY FALKLAND.—Not so intolerable as an indifferent one, though more ridiculous, perhaps;—and where is the woman who objects to see a man make himself silly now and then, when in doing so he proves the strength of his affection for her?

LOUISA.—Trust me, sister, as no man is over-confident before marriage but from personal vanity, so no man is wrongly mistrustful after marriage but from a secret sense of personal

unworthiness. Sir Frederick Falkland is too sensible a man to be jealous of *you*, and he is too honourable a man to be jealous of *himself*. Besides, my dear, think of the accomplished, the elegant, the fashionable Sir Frederick Falkland—fashionable in all things but the vices and follies of fashion—appearing to the world in the vulgar character of “The Jealous Husband!”—Why, you’ll have yourselves put into a new comedy, or a fashionable novel, for the mingled amusement and instruction of the town !

LADY FALKLAND.—Better anything than have my husband so indifferent as patiently to see his wife receive the insulting attentions—almost the open professions of love—of an avowed and successful libertine like Belton. You must have seen how he has persecuted me lately, Louisa ?

LOUISA.—If civility be persecution, Mr Belton is certainly guilty of that crime towards you ; but, I believe you are the only person who will charge him with it.

LADY FALKLAND.—For my part, I had rather be subjected to the shallow satire in which he indulges himself at the expense of all his other acquaintance, than be distinguished by such marks of his partiality ; and if it were not that I am determined in some way or other to make my husband jealous, I would have got rid of Mr Belton’s odious “civilities” long ago.

LOUISA.—But my dear heroic sister, how can you expect the poor man to take the trouble of being jealous of *you* when you don’t do *him* that favour, though you see him the chosen object of coquetry with half the married flirts in town ?

LADY FALKLAND.—My pride would not suffer me to own my feelings, even if I doubted his faith—which at present I do not. It is his indifference I dread—his honour I have never yet suspected.

Enter IDLETON, in dressing-gown and slippers, as just risen.

LOUISA.—What—Cousin Idleton!—is it possible you did not go out of town last night, as you settled you would? Why, we saw your travelling carriage at the door as we came home from the Opera. What on earth could have kept you in town?

IDLETON (*in a drawling and listless tone throughout*).—Was I going?—oh—ay—I remember—though, faith, I quite forgot what it was detained me. I dare say it was some stupid blunder of my people. They're always mistaking my orders, though I give them so clearly—except that I sometimes forget the trifling particulars of time, place, and all that.

LOUISA.—Yes—you tell them everything but exactly what you want them to remember.

IDLETON.—You know I was engaged to dine with Frank—what's his name?—I never can recollect people's names. He lives in—what do you call the street?—I never could remember the names of streets—it runs out of the Square where—however I was engaged to dine with somebody; but as I couldn't recollect who it was, I was obliged to leave my fellow to guess. And where do you think he took me?

LOUISA.—I can't guess, I'm sure.

IDLETON.—Do.

LOUISA.—I can't.

IDLETON.—I wish you would—for I can't, for the life of me, recollect her name.

LOUISA.—What—to a lady's?

IDLETON.—Ay—that handsome Frenchwoman, who talks so fast—you know her, both of you—Falkland's favourite. By the bye, Falkland dined there with us.

LADY FALKLAND (*now first seeming to listen*).—Did he? At whose house did you say it was?

LOUISA.—I suppose he means our lively, laughing acquaintance, Madame Beaumonde, the brilliant Parisian widow.

IDLETON.—The same. Upon my soul she's a charming woman, and said a number of good things. I'd tell you some of them, only I never *can* recollect what people say.

LADY FALKLAND.—And Sir Frederick, you say, was there?

IDLETON.—Yes—and very brilliant he was, too.

LADY FALKLAND.—Indeed!

IDLETON.—Yes; there was one capital thing he said—about your picture in the Exhibition.

LADY FALKLAND.—Indeed! (*Aside.*) He hears me made the jest of his acquaintance, I suppose. (*Aloud.*) I should like to hear it.

IDLETON.—Let me see—Madame said that—that is, Falkland said—in short, it was excessively good indeed—everybody laughed—you'd have been monstrously entertained.

LADY FALKLAND.—And Frederick laughed?

IDLETON.—Yes. And when somebody rallied him about being jealous of you—

LADY FALKLAND (*eagerly*).—Jealous? What—do you think he *is* jealous then?

IDLETON.—Jealous! Not he—no more jealous than you are of him.

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—Provoking!

Enter Servant.

SERVANT.—Sir, your servant waits with the horses—do you ride this morning?

IDLETON.—Eh?—Ride?—O—yes—that is—I don't know—let him wait. (*Exit Servant.*) No, no, cousin; don't make yourself uneasy about that matter—Falkland has too much sense to be jealous.

LADY FALKLAND.—What—do you think that sense and sensibility are incompatible?

IDLETON (*with a mystified air*).—Eh?—sensibility?—sense?—eh?

LADY FALKLAND.—Surely you will not deny that the most refined minds are often tinctured with jealousy?

IDLETON.—Eh?—Oh yes—I dare say—

LADY FALKLAND.—Why, then, what reason can you have for—

IDLETON.—Reason! Lud, cousin, you know I hate having a reason—I never had a reason for anything in my life. Why, I would vacate my seat in the House to-morrow, rather than be obliged to have a reason for any of my votes—and so I believe would many more besides myself.

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—My warmth had almost betrayed me. (*To him.*) Ha! ha! ha!—Well, you are perfectly right, cousin Idleton; jealousy is certainly very ridiculous; though I dare say you thought, by the warmth of my manner, that I was really in earnest, and meant what I said.

IDLETON.—O dear, no—I have so often seen people in the place I was just speaking of show a vast deal of warmth without believing a word of what they wished to make others believe, that I don't judge hastily on such occasions. (*He saunters to the bell, and rings.*)

LADY FALKLAND.—Well, adieu! I shall call on Madame Beaumonde, and we will laugh over the conversation of yesterday.

LOUISA.—And leave cousin Idleton to perform a feat of horsemanship which Duerow himself never dreamt of—to ride in his sleep! (*Exeunt Lady Falkland and Louisa.*)

Enter Servant.

SERVANT.—Did you ring, sir?

IDLETON.—Eh?—did I ring—oh, yes—have the goodness to tell my man to bring the horses round.

SERVANT.—Sir?—He has been in waiting with them this half hour, sir, by your orders.

IDLETON.—Eh?—oh, well—tell him I'm coming presently—stay—and tell him—tell him I shan't ride to-day.

SERVANT.—Yes, sir—but I'll tell him to wait, sir—you may change your mind, you know, sir.

IDLETON.—Change my mind! Come, that's very good. As if I could take so much trouble! Be good enough to fetch me the 'Morning Post.' (*Exit Servant, who re-enters almost immediately.*)

SERVANT.—Mr Knowall, sir.

Enter KNOWALL.

IDLETON.—Ah, Knowall. (*To Servant*). You needn't fetch me the 'Morning Post' now. Mr Knowall answers all the purpose, and without the trouble of reading him. (*Exit Servant.*)

KNOWALL.—How are you, Idleton? I met your servant an hour ago, and he said you were going out immediately, so I knew I should find you at home.

IDLETON.—Eh?—oh. Well, is there anything new at the clubs?

KNOWALL.—Why, I was going to ask *you*; but your memory makes such a chaos of all you hear, that your stories are like the scandalous paragraphs in the Sunday papers—so full of blanks and dashes, that nobody can comprehend them without knowing all about the subject matter beforehand.

IDLETON.—Why, really, one hears such a jumble of intelligence in the course of the day, that it requires a sort of chemical process to separate the various kinds of nonsense from one another.

KNOWALL.—Come, you know my anxiety to learn—try at a bit of news, now—something striking—something extraordinary. You've always the elements of some strange story

floating confusedly in your brain, though you never remember any of the particulars, nor how you came by it. Now I dote on details. The best bit of scandal in the world is not worth repeating unless one can give the minutest particulars of time, place, parties, and so forth—"names, weights, and colours of the riders"—as the racing cards have it—eh? But come—your news.

IDLETON.—Something extraordinary? Why, it must be very extraordinary indeed if *you* don't know it. I suppose you've heard of the girl in the next street, who—

KNOWALL (*interrupting*).—What, Miss Trinkett, who eloped with her father's footman the day before she was to be married? Yes; but her intended husband was fifty, and she fifteen, so there's nothing extraordinary in *that*.

IDLETON.—Well, there's the new-married lady next door—

KNOWALL (*interrupting*).—Who was seen going from the Opera the other night with Colonel Cartridge, and came home about dinner-time the next day? Yes, but the colonel's her husband's particular friend, you know, so there's nothing extraordinary in *that*.

IDLETON.—Have you heard of our friend—what's his name? shooting himself?

KNOWALL.—Nothing extraordinary in one's friends shooting themselves now-a-days—but whom do you mean?

IDLETON.—Psha! you must recollect his name.

KNOWALL.—Not I—it's impossible to remember the names of all the people who shoot themselves.

IDLETON.—It was because his wife ran away from him.

KNOWALL.—Well, there *is* something extraordinary in that—in a man of fashion too!

IDLETON.—Yes; and he made his steward pay all his tradesmen their bills before he loaded his pistols.

KNOWALL.—Come, you have hit upon something extraordinary at last. But whom do you mean?

IDLETON.—Why the man—what the deuce is his name—I never *can* recollect people's names—but his always reminds me of his wife's diamond necklace.

KNOWALL.—What, Sparkle? Oh, I heard of his accident, poor man, a week ago.

IDLETON.—The devil you did? Why it only happened yesterday.

KNOWALL.—Well, I knew it *would* happen, and that's much the same thing.

IDLETON.—As you seem so intimately acquainted with everything that happens or will happen, I wish you would save me the trouble of relating it to you.

KNOWALL.—Ha! ha! ha! Why, I believe I have as good information as most people.

Enter Servant.

SERVANT (*to Idleton*).—Mr Belton, sir.

IDLETON.—Oh, show him in.

KNOWALL.—Then I'm off. I don't like that Belton—he's so cursedly satirical. But I say, Idleton, what does he want here? (*Aside.*) Something going on—I'll stay and see. (*To Idleton.*) Lady Falkland—eh? (*significantly*).

Enter BELTON, and exit Servant.

KNOWALL.—Ah, my dear Belton, I was this moment talking of you.

BELTON.—Indeed! What folly have I been committing, to merit that? But it's some consolation that my disgrace will not be made public; for even if Idleton attended to what you've been inventing about me, he'll be sure to forget my name, and tell the story of somebody else.

KNOWALL.—Ha! ha! ha!—excellent.

IDLETON.—What was that?

KNOWALL.—Something deuced severe.

IDLETON.—Indeed!—I like severe things—they tell me I say severe things myself sometimes. (*Yawns.*)

BELTON.—Who was it said so severe a thing as that? By the bye, Idleton, do you know how long Lady Falkland has been gone out? (*Aside.*) I very much suspect she is denied to me.

IDLETON.—How long is it, Knowall? I think she was here just now. Wasn't she? You were saying—

KNOWALL.—I?—I never saw her ladyship in my life.

BELTON. (*Aside.*) A thought strikes me. It will serve to mask my designs on Lady Falkland, which already begin to be suspected. (*To Knowall.*) You say you don't know Lady Falkland. Are you acquainted with Sir Frederick?

KNOWALL.—Can't say I recollect him—I've heard something of him though—jealous of his wife, isn't he, Idleton?

IDLETON.—Jealous? eh? Yes—no—I declare I quite forget; but I dare say he is—all husbands are, you know.

BELTON (*aside*).—But then how to get rid of Idleton? (*To him.*) Idleton, if you love ease well enough to take a little trouble in securing it, now's your time. Adams is this very day going to send abroad a britzka on an entirely new construction—so easy that you wouldn't know it moved it all. Travelling in it is as good as sitting still at home.

IDLETON.—But my cab isn't here, and I'm fatigued to death with talking to Knowall.

BELTON.—Take mine—it's at the door. Come, dress and be off—you'll never forgive yourself if you lose this opportunity.

IDLETON.—Well, but, my dear fellow, I—really—(*Exit Idleton, Belton pushing him out.*)

Enter SIR FREDERICK FALKLAND, at the opposite side.

BELTON (*running up to him, and speaking aside*).—My dear Sir Frederick, I've brought you an oddity, for your amusement. He pretends to know everything, and like

the philosopher of old, his wisdom consists in knowing nothing at all. Then he'll lie, like an oracle or an auctioneer ; and if you happen to detect one of his forged scandals by the sound (as they do bad shillings), he'll coin you twenty more on the spot, as vouchers for his veracity. As two negatives make an affirmative, he doesn't see why two lies shouldn't make a truth, or pass current for one, which is all he cares about.

KNOWALL (*aside*).—What the devil is Belton whispering to that person ?

BELTON (*introducing SIR FREDERICK to KNOWALL*).—Knowall, this is a particular friend of Sir Frederick Falkland's. (*Aside to KNOWALL.*) A precious stupid fellow—you may make him believe anything. (*Aloud to SIR FREDERICK.*) When did you see our friend Sir Frederick Falkland ?

SIR FREDERICK.—I had just a glimpse of him this morning—(*aside*)—in the looking-glass !

BELTON.—I wonder, Knowall, that you, who are acquainted with everybody, should not know Sir Frederick Falkland.

KNOWALL.—Oh, on recollection I do know him.

BELTON.—Why, what sort of a man is he ?

KNOWALL.—Oh, a little, light-haired man—rather mean looking.

SIR FREDERICK.—Little !—light-haired !—ha ! ha ! Sir Frederick Falkland is dark, and as tall as I am.

KNOWALL.—Well, he appeared to me to be short—middle-sized, perhaps—or rather inclining to be tall.

BELTON.—And what do you think of Lady Falkland, Knowall ?

KNOWALL.—Rather a plain woman—and such a flirt !

SIR FREDERICK (*annoyed*).—A flirt !—plain ! I believe, sir, I may boast a rather more intimate acquaintance with Lady Falkland than you can, and I have always thought her remarkably handsome ; and as to her being a flirt—

BELTON (*interrupting*).—By the bye, Knowall, I don't be-

lieve a word of that scandalous story you told me the other day of Lady Falkland and Captain Racket.

SIR FREDERICK.—Of Lady Falkland?

BELTON.—Yes; a ridiculous story of her being escorted from the Opera by a Captain—Racket—wasn't it Racket, Knowall? Why, you won't deny you told it to me?

KNOWALL (*aside*).—Deuce take me if I recollect a word of it. (*Aloud.*) Eh? Did I?

BELTON.—Why, all the town is talking of it.

SIR FREDERICK.—Talking of Lady Falkland!—(*Aside.*) I shall expose myself presently.

BELTON (*aside, looking at FALKLAND*).—He feels it, I see.

KNOWALL (*aside*).—If all the town is talking of it, I suppose I may safely own to it. (*Aloud.*) Why, Belton, you know when I relate a thing, I always have good authority for it. (*To SIR FREDERICK.*) There certainly is no doubt, sir, that the lady did leave the Opera with Captain (*aside*)—who did he say? (*Aside to BELTON.*) Captain—Racket, didn't you say? (*He assents.*) (*Aloud.*) With Captain Racket.

SIR FREDERICK (*eagerly*).—Captain Racket! When, sir?

KNOWALL.—Why, on Saturday week (*aside, to BELTON*)—wasn't it Saturday?—Yes, Saturday!—Oh, it's beyond all contradiction.

SIR FREDERICK.—Except mine, sir, for I was with the lady at Sir Frederick's country place that very evening.

BELTON.—There, Knowall, you see what your authority amounts to. I suppose all the other nonsensical tales you have told of the same lady have as much foundation.

KNOWALL (*aside*).—I shall get into a scrape here—I had better be off. (*Aloud.*) Why, as to that, I can only say I had as good authority for one as for the others; and I believe it, every word. But I can't lose my time in giving you explanations—I'm now half-an-hour beyond my appointment with Sir Harry Headlong. Gentlemen, yours. (*Exit.*)

BELTON.—Ha! ha! ha!

SIR FREDERICK.—Call him back, Belton. He believes every word of it? 'Sdeath! who is this Captain Racket? I must have this explained!

BELTON.—My dear Falkland, can it require explanation?

SIR FREDERICK.—What, sir! when Lady Falkland's honour is in question?—when my peace of mind—

BELTON.—Nay; if you are serious, I'll ease your inquietude at once, by assuring you that no such person as Captain Racket exists, and that the whole story was an extempore mystification of my own, intended merely to amuse you by an exhibition of Knowall's passion for telling news that he never heard, and pretending intimacy with people he don't know. But, my dear Falkland (*seizing his hand with apparent interest*), you have exposed to me a feature in your character that I never perceived before—you are positively a jealous husband.

SIR FREDERICK.—Jealous?—jealous! Come, that's very good! there's a distinction between jealousy and that regard which a husband feels for his wife's honour.

BELTON.—A distinction, I suspect, too nice to be perceived by anybody but a jealous husband!

SIR FREDERICK.—Bravo, Belton! and so you think with that grave face to persuade me that you really believe me jealous! when you have so often heard me declare how absurd I think it.

BELTON (*ironically*).—Often!

SIR FREDERICK.—I vow I know nothing that places a man in so ridiculous a point of view.

BELTON (*ironically*).—Nothing!

SIR FREDERICK.—There are, I know, some Quixotes in love, who measure the amount of their attachment by the degree to which they make the object of it miserable. Now, for my part, I love Lady Falkland very well; but I don't recollect that my affection for her ever extended to making me wish her and myself at the devil, merely because she might have said "How d'ye do?" to a smart fellow, with a smile

upon her face. (*Aside.*) He certainly perceives my uneasiness.

BELTON.—I'm glad to hear it—I feared it was otherwise.

SIR FREDERICK.—Besides, when a man is really jealous, it is impossible for him to conceal it. The more pains he takes to hide his unfortunate temper, the more evidently it shows itself.

BELTON (*ironically*).—Very true, indeed.

SIR FREDERICK.—I jealous—ha! ha! ha! I can't help laughing at the very idea.

BELTON (*the same*).—So I see ; and you laugh so naturally too !

SIR FREDERICK.—I hope I have convinced you.

BELTON.—Oh, perfectly! The fact is, my dear Falkland, your heart is a perfect combustible, and one spark of suspicion falling on it would turn it into a firework, for the amusement of your friends.

SIR FREDERICK.—Absurd !

BELTON.—You have as much of the romantic in you as a lady's-maid, or a country circulating library, and when the whim seizes you, would cut the throat of your best friend for even looking at your wife.

SIR FREDERICK.—Captain Belton, you—

BELTON.—Nay, Falkland, don't be offended—you have too much good sense to be angry at the truth ; and I think it so friendly an act to let you know it, that—come—I'll bet you five hundred to your new britzka and bays, that I'll make you seriously jealous, even of me.

SIR FREDERICK.—'Faith, Belton, if I had that latent spark of jealousy in my composition which you talk of, I know of no man more dangerously qualified to light it into a flame than yourself. But whether it proceeds from vanity, or from the natural indifference of my disposition, I think even your pretensions—

BELTON.—Ha! ha! ha! Well, it's a bet, then?

SIR FREDERICK.—Ay, if you like.

BELTON.—Done, then! But, remember, I am permitted to come in and out as I like, and talk a little nonsense to Lady Falkland, without the fear of twelve paces and an inquest before my eyes! Upon these conditions, I engage to show you the gallant and accomplished Sir Frederick Falkland, running out of his very wits for jealousy, at the innocent attentions paid to his wife by so insignificant a person as Harry Belton!

[*Exit.*

SIR FREDERICK.—What's to be done now? Belton has certainly discovered my ridiculous foible—that I would hide from all the world—even from myself! Oh, Caroline! what a woman would she be, had she but a soul sensitive as mine! But, alas! notwithstanding all her beauty, all her accomplishments, that exquisite sensibility is wanting which can alone fitly complete the female character. If I could but make her jealous, by trifling with Madame Beaumonde! ah! there is no concealing it—indifference to a husband is the first step towards the reception of a lover.

[*Exit.*

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE—*A drawing-room in Madame Beaumonde's house.*
Madame B. is adjusting her hair, &c., at a mirror. Enter a servant, who announces Mr Belton, who follows.

MADAME BEAUMONDE and BELTON.

BELTON.—Good morning, Madame Beaumonde. You are late at your toilette.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—No fault of mine, Mr Belton. I am not dressed to please myself. The rouge in your country is so bad!

BELTON.—You surprise me. I have seen as excellent rouge in England as in any part of the world.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—You have? Pray tell me where. I can get none in London fit to be used.

BELTON.—Why, in London, indeed, you are not likely to meet with it; but in the country I could show you specimens on the cheeks of some Englishwomen that would shame all Paris. But I'm afraid you'll think they pay too high a price for it?

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Impossible! My dear Mr Belton, tell me where it is to be got?

BELTON.—Why, I have seen it procured by rising every day with the sun—milking half-a-dozen cows before breakfast—walking three or four miles to church on a Sunday—and,

now and then, jumping a country dance on the village green, to the melodious strains of a blind fiddler.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Ah, *le monstre!* But I forgot—you're a wit, Mr Belton; and a wit, like an Opera-dancer, requires incessant practice. Inactivity is equally fatal to the tongue of the one and the toe of the other.

BELTON.—You are happy in your similes this morning.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—To show you that I duly value so scarce an honour as Mr Belton's approval, I'll try another. We may compare the head of a professed wit—Mr Belton's, for instance—to Maradan's or Herbault's brilliant show-rooms: whilst the wit, like the fashionable *modiste*, can keep up a constant supply of fresh articles, the novelty of the display makes up for the flimsiness of the material; but the moment either fails to produce that “soul of wit”—not “brevity,” as one of your poets describes it, but *nouveauté*—we women are apt to fly to another of the trade. The truth is, I begin to grow tired of you, Mr Belton.

BELTON.—That is because I have left off making love to you.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—No—it is because you have said all your handsome things to me twice or thrice over—and—

BELTON.—Hold! hold! I cry for quarter. Is it not enough that you have given me one signal defeat, by blighting my ambitious hopes of succeeding to the vacant place in your heart?

MADAME BEAUMONDE (*more seriously*).—The general, Mr Belton, who besieges a fortress without learning beforehand the strength of the garrison deserves to be defeated.

BELTON.—True; but a British general is apt to believe no place impregnable till he himself has failed to carry it.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—A man of true gallantry, Mr Belton, will always believe the citadel of a lady's heart to be impregnable till success undeceives him; whereas you wits and fine gentlemen expect to carry the place by a *coup-de-main*, with-

out even the ceremony of a formal summons—a manœuvre, I suspect, that *you* never dream of, unless as a *ruse-de-guerre*.

BELTON.—Nay—this is not fair—you fire on my flag of truce. I have ceased to approach you in hostile array—all I ask is to be allowed to capitulate, and be henceforth regarded as a friend and ally.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—In order that you may be in a condition to draw off your forces, and carry the war into some more assailable quarter?

BELTON.—Better be upon actual duty, however perilous, than starving upon half-pay!

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—And may I ask the name of the fair enemy against whom your tactics are at present employed?

BELTON.—What think you of your new friend, Lady Falkland?

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Lady Falkland!—(*aside*)—This must be looked to. I would not for the world have my sweet little sentimental friend fall into the snares of this clever libertine. (*To him.*) Lady Falkland?

BELTON.—Yes—a lovely woman, married to a man who, though a very accomplished fellow, is totally indifferent to all her charms—and for the best reason in the world.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—And what may that be?

BELTON.—Why, that he has become a captive to the brilliant eyes and sparkling wit of a certain Parisian widow—(*aside*)—I suspect she likes Falkland—and if I can but persuade her that *he* is in love with *her*, and thus make her look upon his wife as her rival, the natural malice of the sex will induce her to aid in sacrificing that rival to me.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—You jest. What can Sir Frederick Falkland ever have said to justify your suspicion?

Enter a Page.

PAGE.—Sir Frederick Falkland, Madame.

BELTON.—You had better question him yourself.

Enter SIR FREDERICK FALKLAND. Exit Page.

SIR FREDERICK.—You see, Madame Beaumonde, I take advantage of your Parisian habits to visit you unsanctioned by the presence of my wife. (*To Belton.*) Ah, Belton! always basking in the beams of beauty's eyes.

BELTON (*aside to Falkland.*)—I suspect the warmest of those beams are reserved for *you*, Falkland. But of course your *arcadian* passion for your wife has armed you against their influence. (*Falkland and Madame Beaumonde talk apart.*) Lucky that he should come in just at this moment. Now, kind fortune, help me to make Falkland and the little widow in love with each other (if they are not so already), and my designs on Lady Falkland are half accomplished.

SIR FREDERICK.—Ha! ha! ha! Will you never leave off saying rude things, Belton? Madame Beaumonde tells me you and she have just had a smart skirmish of wit.

BELTON.—In which I have been so worsted that I shall beat a retreat. Perhaps you may succeed better, This I can promise you—the lady will defend her colours to the last. *Au revoir* Madame Beaumonde—Adieu, Falkland. (*Exit.*)

SIR FREDERICK.—Well—I do confess that I think rouge upon a handsome woman—

MADAME BEAUMONDE (*interrupting him*).—Before I hear your confession you must tell me what is Lady Falkland's opinion; for I hold it to be downright treason against the laws of taste for a man to differ from his wife on a point of this nature.

SIR FREDERICK.—You will perceive by *this* (*showing her*

Lady Falkland's portrait in a ring) that Lady Falkland does not disdain to appear in colours not her own.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—*Ah mon Dieu!* Your wife's picture in a ring! (*taking it off his finger*). My dear Sir Frederick, is it because you are so true a turtle as not to be able to live apart from the image of your mate that you wear this? Or is it that, fearing your own natural frailty and inconstancy, you carry it about with you as a talisman to preserve you from the spells of other enchantresses?

SIR FREDERICK.—Madame, I—

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Or perhaps you regard it as a sort of melancholy memento of your fate? As a death's-head tells a self-denying saint—“Alas! thou art mortal!” So this pretty effigy is to remind the gay Sir Frederick Falkland—“Alas! thou art married!” But really I have too much regard for both of you to let you make yourselves ridiculous any longer. I'll send this ring to my jewellers, and have it re-set for you in some other form.

SIR FREDERICK (*aside*).—I would not have it touched for the world—it was her first gift to me.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Let me see—what do you say to having the bauble converted into a locket? It may then repose on your bosom—a rather more appropriate bestowal of it than it lately boasted. Yes—a locket it shall be.

SIR FREDERICK.—Consider, my dear Madame Beaumonde, the trouble this will be giving you.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Consider, my dear Sir Frederick Falkland, the satisfaction of rendering so signal service to two friends! and if I do constrain your inclination a little, 'tis but a gentle violence.

SIR FREDERICK.—Well—since you allow a “gentle violence”—(*He struggles with her for the ring, during which Lady Falkland enters, preceded by a Page, who announces her*). Caroline here!—This is just as I could have wished. If

she will but show a little jealousy now I shall be the happiest of men.

LADY FALKLAND (*suppressing her feelings and assuming affected indifference*).—I beg pardon—really, I—I should make a thousand apologies, Madame Beaumonde—the servant told me he thought you were alone—(*aside*)—how I detest him!

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Most opportunely arrived, my dear Lady Falkland. I claim your acknowledgments. Thanks to my friendly consideration, you will no longer have the mortification of seeing your portrait adorn the hand of a lordly husband.

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—Heavens! has he given her my portrait?

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Cannot these men be satisfied with our yielding them our liberty, without placarding their triumph by openly carrying us about in effigy, like prisoners chained to the chariot-wheels of their conqueror?

LADY FALKLAND.—Believe me, Madame Beaumonde, you will find in England women who are still so unfashionably natural as not to be ashamed of owning a husband as their best protector and dearest friend.

SIR FREDERICK (*aside*).—Charming creature! If I could but once make her jealous of me!

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—*Brava*, my little philosophic sentimentalist! Ha! ha! ha! An English married woman descanting on the charms of matrimony reminds me of a countryman of mine who wrote an essay on the pleasures of solitude whilst imprisoned in the Bastille. Well—after your lecture I shall make no apology for leaving you together while I write a few notes. If your tête-à-tête grows dull for want of contradiction, send for me. (*Exit*.)

(SIR FREDERICK and LADY FALKLAND walk about the stage embarrassed, as if considering how they shall address each other.)

SIR FREDERICK.—She's delightfully agitated—I begin to hope she's growing angry.

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—I'd rather die than let him perceive that I feel his treatment.

SIR FREDERICK (*aside*).—Dear creature! How happy it makes me to see her so miserable! (*To her*.) Caroline, my love, I dare say this circumstance of the ring must appear a little odd to you—it must naturally create a—a kind of—

LADY FALKLAND.—Why, I own, Sir Frederick Falkland—that is, I—(*aside*)—what am I about? I shall expose my uneasiness to him.

SIR FREDERICK (*aside*).—Yes, yes—she is jealous at last. I shall have the gratification of hearing her abuse me presently. (*To her*.) I was going to say, Caroline, that however strange this affair of the portrait may appear, I can give you an explanation that—

LADY FALKLAND.—Oh—explanation is quite superfluous.

SIR FREDERICK.—I am persuaded, my dear, that you have so full a confidence in me—

LADY FALKLAND (*with forced composure*).—Of course I have, my love.

SIR FREDERICK (*aside*).—Why, then, she's *not* jealous after all!

LADY FALKLAND.—But really as to this ring—(*aside*)—I'll turn the tables on him. (*To him*.) I trust, Frederick, you will not impute wrong motives to what I am going to say—but—

SIR FREDERICK.—Impossible, my love!—go on—(*aside*)—then she *is* alive to the jealous agonies of a refined affection!

LADY FALKLAND.—The truth is, Mr Belton has long persecuted me for my portrait—and—

SIR FREDERICK.—Indeed!—(*aside*)—what's coming now?

LADY FALKLAND.—And—I was thinking of giving him this ring—which *you* no longer care about.

SIR FREDERICK (*aside*).—I'm confounded!—what!—give her portrait to Belton!—(*to her*)—Lady Falkland, I—

LADY FALKLAND.—I should thus, you know, stop his importunities, and—but you don't answer me.

SIR FREDERICK.—Answer you?—no—that is—because—in short, you have anticipated my intention—I was thinking of the very same thing myself.

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—What horrid insensibility!—thinking of giving a man my portrait!

SIR FREDERICK (*aside*).—So—the tables are turned on me with a vengeance. (*To her*.) My dear Caroline, you have made me happy by showing me how entirely you are a stranger to the jealous whims of vulgar minds.

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—Why, this is worse and worse! What a turn he has given to my endeavour to excite his sensibility! Sensibility?—but he has none. At least, he shall not triumph in the belief that I have more than himself.

SIR FREDERICK.—I own—for I will be frank with you, my dear Caroline—I own that I feared the little trifling in which I have indulged myself with our Parisian friend here might have given you some uneasiness.

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—He's but too conscious that I had cause for uneasiness. (*To him*.) Well, my love, I hope my behaviour on this occasion has proved the contrary. You must now be convinced—

SIR FREDERICK.—So fully that I wish no further proof, I assure you. (*Aside*.) Her coldness and indifference distract me.

LADY FALKLAND.—And as we are opening our hearts to each other without reserve, I will confess that you have made me as happy as I have made you; for I have thought it pro-

bable that you might be rather disturbed at Mr Belton's marked attentions to me.

SIR FREDERICK.—You must now, however, be assured that—

LADY FALKLAND.—Oh ! entirely—in short, every doubt is removed.

SIR FREDERICK.—What mistaken opinions we have formed of each other !—ha ! ha ! ha !—each to fancy the other jealous !

LADY FALKLAND.—Ha ! ha ! ha ! Ridiculous enough, to be sure !

(Enter MADAME BEAUMONDE.)

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—I need not apologise for my long absence, since I find you in such good humour. I had no idea tête-à-têtes between English married couples were so lively.

SIR FREDERICK.—But ours has been conducted quite on the Parisian principle. Lady Falkland and I have agreed that jealousy between man and wife is as absurd as it is unfashionable, and we have enjoyed the satisfaction of convincing each other that neither has the least tinge of yellow in our composition.

LADY FALKLAND.—I can't give a more convincing proof as to myself, than by leaving Sir Frederick here while I go and finish my calls. (*Aside.*) I cannot endure her hateful presence any longer.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Well—I felicitate you both. Jealous people are the most ridiculous creatures in nature, and every endeavour to conceal their absurd infirmity only exposes it the more plainly.

LADY FALKLAND (*confused*).—Certainly—yes—you are quite right.

SIR FREDERICK (*confused*).—Undoubtedly—so I have told Lady Falkland a thousand times.

MADAME BEAUMONDE (*looking mischievously at each in*

turn).—But everybody may see that neither of *you* have anything of the kind about you.

SIR FREDERICK.—Why no—I flatter myself—that—

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—There is an unaffected ease in your manner at this moment—

LADY FALKLAND.—You are very kind—

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—A gaiety free from all constraint or embarrassment—

SIR FREDERICK.—As for me, I was never more at ease in my life.

LADY FALKLAND.—And for my part (*sighing*) I am very happy! Adieu, Madame Beaumonde! Good bye, Frederick! (*Exit almost in tears.*)

SIR FREDERICK (*aside and abstractedly*).—Why do I give way to this affectation of indifference? Why not explain myself to Caroline at once? But then her coldness—her want of feeling! (*While he stands with his arms folded, lost in thought, Madame Beaumonde sits down to a sort of toilette-table that is in the room.*)

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—This cheek wants a little more colour.

SIR FREDERICK (*to himself*).—I begin to see it but too plainly.

MADAME BEAUMONDE. You do!—(*aside*)—more frank than polite—(*aloud*)—why, then, I'll put a little more on.

SIR FREDERICK (*still in reverie*).—It must be genuine—

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—I'm afraid not—but it's the best I could get in London.

SIR FREDERICK (*as before*).—Her indifference is but too obvious.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Eh?—ha! ha! ha! Sir Frederick in a reverie!

SIR FREDERICK.—I beg pardon, Madame Beaumonde. It is indeed time to take my leave, when I forget in her presence a person of whom it is so difficult to cease thinking even in absence.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Ah—very prettily turned. Adieu! (*Exit SIR FREDERICK FALKLAND.*) I see how it is. The only fault of this charming couple is that they are too fond of one another. And that serpent, Belton, is trying to creep into the Paradise of their love, and blight its fairest flower, their mutual confidence. It shall go hard but I'll defeat his base designs. But how? how? Why, am I not a woman, a Parisian, and a widow to boot! And shall I be foiled—and in a good cause too—by a denizen of the foggy atmosphere of Mayfair? Forbid it the bright skies and the brighter wit of the dear Faubourg St Honoré! (*Exit.*)

SCENE *changes to an anteroom in the house of SIR FREDERICK FALKLAND.* FRANK and LUCY enter in opposite directions.

FRANK.—Good morning to you, Mistress Lucy; have you seen anything of my governor to-day?

LUCY.—Not in person—but in print I have.

FRANK.—Oh—then you've heard of our little frolic?

LUCY.—Yes—one of the Sunday papers was good enough to inform me, in a very abusive paragraph, that a certain dashing young leader of fashion, whose name they write Mr W seven stars E, was the principal in a disgraceful riot at the Opera on Saturday night. What scandalous liberties the papers do take with people of fashion!

FRANK.—Yes—they speak almost as freely of them as we do who serve them!

LUCY.—And you are now going to the editor, I suppose, to get the statement contradicted.

FRANK.—Contradicted? Why I put it in myself—my governor wrote it.

LUCY.—Wrote it? Well—this is a new refinement in satire—for a gentleman to abuse himself.

FRANK.—Yes—but public notice, you know, is absolutely necessary to a young gentleman in a certain station of life, and if the world are so much engaged with their own follies as not

to observe his, the only resource left him is to force himself upon their attention. It is true everybody can make themselves ridiculous, but everybody can't afford, as *we* can, to have our absurdities placarded in the newspapers.

LUCY.—But I thought the town was so good-natured as seldom to refuse its attention to a person so persevering in absurdity as Mr Wildgoose.

FRANK.—Why, they may give him a passing glance, perhaps—but they can afford him no more—he has so many rivals.

LUCY.—And pray what kind of new absurdity has Mr Wildgoose indulged in lately?

FRANK.—Every kind, in turn, my dear. Singularity in dress was his hobby for some time. He used to keep a private tailor all to himself (as our great lords keep a family parson and physician) to invent new fashions for him that he thought nobody would be fools enough to follow. But the young “gents” east of Temple Bar soon taught him that this was trouble and expense thrown away—for dress himself as ridiculously as he could one week, they were sure to outdo him in absurdity the next; so now he dresses like a gentleman—that being the only style that defies vulgar imitation.

LUCY.—Well—and what was his next fancy?

FRANK.—Why, equipages and horses were next the order of the day with him. In the course of one twelvemonth he set up and overturned every species of vehicle that ever ran upon wheels,—from the lordly four-in-hand of the Whip-club to the lowly donkey-cart of the costermonger: as the song says—

“ Phaeton, whisky, buggy, dogcart,
Curricles and tandem—”

each and all took their turn in his favour. But after having half a score of lawsuits to settle for mutilating stray children and exterminating superfluous old ladies (not to mention cracking half his own ribs, and putting out my collar-bone), he got

tired of charioteering, and took to a more intellectual line of amusement.

LUCY.—Intellectual! If “the march of intellect” is reaching our young men of fashion, it is time for you and I to look about us, Mister Frank. One would not, you know, like to disgrace the honourable callings of gentleman’s gentleman and lady’s own woman by knowing no more than our employers. But, Mr Wildgoose—his absurdities amuse me. What receipt for notoriety did he resort to next?

FRANK.—Why, he imbibed a violent passion for the Green Room, and, as the most striking thing he could do in that line, he offered, in turn, to marry half-a-dozen handsome actresses. But, as he isn’t a lord, they one and all turned up their noses at him.

LUCY (*bridling affectedly*).—He might have looked a little higher than actresses, I think.

FRANK.—At present he has an idea of turning his attention to politics and legislation, those being now the pet follies and vices of the day; and, as a preliminary step, he has just purchased a seat in the *Reformed* Parliament! But, as he has not yet attained confidence enough to make himself ridiculous as a public speaker in the House (for Mr Wildgoose, you must know, Lucy, is a modest man), he keeps himself and his fashionable friends from going to sleep there by crowing like a cock, barking like a dog, braying like a donkey, and making sundry other instructive noises, “copied from nature,” as the artists say. And as he has several rivals there in this new accomplishment in natural history, the House of Commons promises soon to become as entertaining and instructive a place of resort as the Zoological Gardens.

LUCY.—Ah—’twill never equal that! The cage of monkeys alone will beat it hollow any day.

FRANK.—But, after all, Mr Wildgoose finds there’s nothing so popular in the great world as profligacy and dissip-

tion. In those he's sure to find a resource when all others fail. Though, to do him justice, he affects more than he practises of them. He has too good a heart to hurt any body but himself. But pray don't say I said so—it might be the ruin of me if it came to his ears—(*a knocking heard*)—hark! that's his knock.

LUCY.—What!—do you expect him here?

FRANK.—Yes—he's coming to hear what your ladies say of our adventure of Saturday night. He's in great hopes they'll forbid him the house, as too wild a person to be safely admitted into female society. He sent me before him to relate his adventure in the servants' hall.

LUCY.—In order that the whole house might be ready to abuse him on his arrival!

FRANK.—Exactly so. Do you know, it's more than my place is worth to give him a good character!

LUCY (*ironically*).—Your's must be a very hard case, indeed, for a fashionable servant, Mister Frank; for you know we make it a point of conscience never to speak *ill* of our employers! (*Exit.*)

Enter WILDGOOSE, preceded by a Servant—throws himself into a chair.

SERVANT.—I'll tell Sir Frederick you are here, sir. (*Exit Servant.*)

WILDGOOSE.—I'm certainly the unluckiest dog alive. Do what I will, nobody seems to notice me. The absurdities I've practised within the last three months would have made the reputation of half-a-score men of ordinary luck; but in me nobody takes any notice of them. I verily believe, if I were to commit high treason, and be beheaded for it on Tower Hill, something or other would happen to prevent anybody from coming to witness the ceremony. As for Pirouette, I'll turn

her off immediately. A pretty joke, indeed! to keep a crack Opera dancer for months, and nobody to know it!

FRANK.—Very hard, indeed, sir—but—

WILDGOOSE.—Hard! Why, I was told to my face just now, at Crockey's, that she's Lord Spindle's! And by Rattlem and Dicely, too—fellows that I counted among my particular friends, for they've pocketed hundreds of my money. And when I told them that she belonged to me, they rang for the waiter, and asked him, in a loud whisper, who I was!

FRANK.—Provoking, really, sir! But he told them, and now they'll tell all the town.

WILDGOOSE.—No—I overheard the rascal say that the gentleman came there often, but that he had quite forgotten his name. Then, to complete my mortification, this is the tenth house I've called at this morning on purpose to hear the story of Saturday night, and nobody's at home. I can't meet with any body to give me news of myself—they've all gone out on purpose to vex me, I believe. But the newspaper man, Frank?

FRANK.—Yes, sir—he has done all you could wish—and the paragraph reads capitally—there's abuse enough in it to ruin any reasonable reputation.

WILDGOOSE.—But are you sure it's quite personal enough, Frank?

FRANK.—Lord, sir! It's so scurrilous that the editor wouldn't insert it till I showed him a copy in your own handwriting.

WILDGOOSE.—It's of no use—nobody reads the papers when my name's in them. Frank, I think if you had given the fellow an extra guinea or two he might have pretended an error of the press, and slipped the paragraph into a column of the parliamentary debates. It would have been so conspicuous there—so novel—

FRANK.—Novel, indeed, sir! One never hears now-a-days of such a thing as personal abuse among parliamentary debates!

WILDGOOSE.—Well—I'll give Pirouette her dismissal, however; that'll make a noise, at any rate.

FRANK.—But perhaps, Sir, as getting rid of an expensive mistress is anything but an absurdity, the story will tell too much to your advantage for anybody to repeat it.

WILDGOOSE.—That's true enough! But no—as it's the only story to my advantage that anybody ever had to tell, the singularity will be sure to make me talked of.

Enter Servant.

SERVANT.—Sir Frederick will be glad to see you in the library, Sir—this way if you please. (*Exeunt WILDGOOSE and SERVANT.*)

FRANK.—Well—now all I have to do is to go into the servant's hall, and talk of my master's profligacy and dissipation. How easily and honestly might most of the servants of young men of fashion earn their wages if, like me, that was the chief point of their duty. (*Exit.*)

SCENE changes to *Lady Falkland's drawing-room*. *Enter LADY FALKLAND and LUCY.*

LADY FALKLAND.—If Sir Frederick should inquire for me, tell him that—that I am not well—that I see nobody. (*Exit LUCY.*) Sir Frederick's behaviour is beyond endurance. Can this insensible husband be the man who but six months ago so loved, so idolized me?—who lived only in my presence? How I detest him!—Yet what would I not give to see him at my feet at this moment.

Enter Servant.

SERVANT.—Mr Belton, my lady.

LADY FALKLAND.—Mr Belton! I'm not at home—I'm not well—I'm—

Enter BELTON.

BELTON.—Lady Falkland alone? Do you not expect to be reproached with your solitude as a crime to society—you, who are formed no less for its adornment than its admiration?

LADY FALKLAND (*pointedly*).—I owe but little to society, Mr Belton, if it is to prevent me from being mistress of myself. There are times, sir, when one desires to be alone.

BELTON.—Assuredly—there are moments when the mind, wearied with the glare and glitter of worldly objects, closes to the senseless sound of trifles, and retires within itself, to its own day-dreams of bliss or sorrow. (*Aside.*) A pretty sentimental flourish, that—quite in her own way.

LADY FALKLAND.—Surely Mr Belton does not speak from experience. Trifles can never displease *him*, while they furnish his satirical temper with themes of amusement. While he can entertain his friends so agreeably by ridiculing the follies and failings of their acquaintance, he can find no inducement to solitary self-contemplation.

BELTON.—Alas, Lady Falkland, rapt in contemplating the bright object of my adoration, my soul is insensible to every other idea. But whither will my presumption lead me!

LADY FALKLAND.—These flights of fancy are far too sublime for my comprehension, Mr Belton.

BELTON.—Ah—Lady Falkland—you *will* not comprehend, and I dare not explain—your frowns command my silence—but let this suppliant posture (*he kneels*).

SIR FREDERICK FALKLAND (*without*).—Where is Lady Falkland?—In the drawing room, do you say?

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—Heavens! Sir Frederick! But stay—may not this new insult be used as a means to rouse his jealousy?

BELTON (*aside*).—"Tis he, faith!—(*rises*)—what the devil shall I do?—stay—oh—I have it!—(*he again kneels*.)

SIR FREDERICK *enters—starts back with surprise*.

BELTON (*rises*).—Ah, Falkland—how are you?

SIR FREDERICK (*embarrassed*).—Belton—I—I'm glad to see you—I—

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—He's angry, that's clear—and I may still hope.

BELTON (*aside to SIR FREDERICK*).—Are you sure you're glad to see me? Have you no scruples—no suspicions? Come, confess honestly you have lost your bet. The britzka and bays are mine, eh? I see that I've made you jealous, and I'll proceed no further.

SIR FREDERICK.—Nonsense! I'd forgotten. (*Aside*.) He'll tell this story everywhere, and my insensible wife herself will join in the laugh against me.

BELTON (*aside to SIR FREDERICK*).—Nay—either you or I must quit the field. If I go, I go in triumph.

SIR FREDERICK.—But who the devil wants you to go?

BELTON.—Then *you* must go—and immediately too.

SIR FREDERICK.—Well, but—

LADY FALKLAND.—Sir Frederick, do you dine at home?

SIR FREDERICK.—Lady Falkland—I—no—that is—(*going*).

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—Good heavens! Is he going to leave me with this man after what he has seen? (*To him*.) You are not going out again, Frederick?

BELTON (*aside to him*).—Instantly! You haven't a moment to spare, you know.

SIR FREDERICK.—Instantly, my love—I haven't a moment

to spare—have I, Belton? Adieu, my dear—good bye, Belton.

BELTON.—Well, if we must lose you—(*Exit* SIR FREDERICK.)

LADY FALKLAND (*aside—in astonishment*).—He's actually gone!

Re-enter SIR FREDERICK.

SIR FREDERICK.—One thing I forgot, Belton—Lady Falkland has told me you have long wished for her picture.

BELTON (*aside*).—The devil she has!

SIR FREDERICK.—And she means to present you with it—I shall give orders to have it reset.

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—Good heavens! Is he serious?

BELTON.—Lady Falkland, I want words to express my gratitude.

SIR FREDERICK (*aside*).—The devil's in it if he can suspect me of jealousy now—or she either. (*Going to take a chair.*) I'll tell you how it happened.

BELTON.—But you forget your engagement. (*Aside to him.*) Recollect the britzka and bays.

SIR FREDERICK (*embarrassed*).—Oh—ay—well, Belton, I shall send you the picture. Adieu, Caroline. (*Aside.*) Sdeath! She'll drive me mad with her indifference. (*Exit.*)

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—This is too much—slighted thus openly!—in the presence of the man who has insulted me! Delicacy, by your leave! I'll try how I can *assume* the character which my heartless husband seems determined to force upon me.

BELTON.—Can I credit my senses? Am I indeed to have the exquisite happiness of possessing the image of Lady Falkland? Am I permitted to press her charming semblance to my lips—to—

LADY FALKLAND.—You have heard what my husband

said. You will dine with us, Mr Belton. Good morning. (*Exit.*)

BELTON.—Exquisite creature! She's mine at last! Poor Falkland! He has yet to learn that the surest support of a married woman's tottering virtue is the outward evidence of her husband's affection. If men would but employ a tithe of the assiduity to *keep* their wives that they do to *win* them, married life would cease to be the jest of the rest of the world, and become its envy.

Enter WILDGOOSE, preceded by a Servant.

SERVANT.—I thought my lady was here, sir. I'll inquire if she's gone out. (*Exit.*)

WILDGOOSE (*aside*).—Belton here? I'll tell him about Pirouette. (*Aloud.*) Well, Belton!—I've made up my mind—I've been duped long enough—I've done with her—you've heard the whole story, I suppose.

BELTON (*to himself—musingly*).—Charming creature! She'll certainly be mine.

WILDGOOSE.—With all my heart—but you'll find her cursedly expensive, I can tell you.

BELTON (*still to himself*).—But how to blind Falkland long enough to give me time?

WILDGOOSE.—Why what the deuce has Falkland to do with her? I know it will make a famous noise. But I've been a fool long enough.

BELTON (*to him—then first observing him*).—Very true, Wildgoose! (*Aside.*) He'll be asking me for that cursed two hundred I lost to him the other night. I must put him off it somehow. (*To him.*) What's that you were talking about, Wildgoose?

WILDGOOSE.—Why, what all the town will be talking about to-morrow—Pirouette, the opera-girl—you know of my little arrangement with her.

BELTON.—Not I. (*He considers*).

WILDGOOSE.—There! I said nobody knew it.

BETLON(*aside, musing*).—Ay—that'll do. (*To him*.) Harkye, Wildgoose—you say you've turned off Pirouette. But you know a mistress or two is as necessary now-a-days to a man of fashion as a stud at Melton. Now suppose I were to introduce you to a young person—a friend of mine.

WILDGOOSE.—My dear fellow, I'm excessively obliged to you. (*Aside*.) A mistress of his would be the making of me. (*To him*.) But when did you part with her?

BELTON.—Part with her? I've never seen her yet.

WILDGOOSE.—I'm sorry for that—your name would have given her so much éclat.

BELTON.—Oh—as to that—when I've leisure I'll take notice of her for you—but just at present I'm in pursuit of higher game. But this girl—such a creature!—at least, I'm told so. But doesnt this proof of my friendship deserve—

WILDGOOSE.—Anything you can ask—except my sky-blue cab with scarlet wheels, and the spotted mare I bought of Ducrow—I wouldnt part with them for a wilderness of women—everybody stares at them so.

BELTON.—Well—I think I lost a couple of hundreds to you at Crockford's the other night—

WILDGOOSE.—Which you may pay me when you find it convenient—a pretty long date that—eh Belton?

BELTON.—Well, on that condition—in three words, then (for I'm in great haste), I've just received a note from a convenient friend of mine, Mrs Lamode, a French milliner, who supplies me with anything in her line that I happen to want—you understand? Well, she tells me she has the loveliest little thing—just up from the country. The girl is to be at my lodgings in an hour's time with some lace veils—you understand?

WILDGOOSE.—Lace veils?—Oh—ay—I see—well?

BELTON.—Well—you shall be there to supply my place. (*Aside.*) And I'll take the earliest opportunity of returning the obligation.

WILDGOOSE.—Upon my life, Belton, this is very kind of you.

BELTON.—Well—it's a bargain, then—is it? Remember to be at my lodgings in an hour, and *don't* remember the two hundred till I remind you of it! (*Exit BELTON.*)

Enter Servant at the opposite side, followed by EMMA BELTON.

WILDGOOSE.—Eh—who have we here?

SERVANT.—Her ladyship will see you presently, ma'am. (*Exit Servant.*)

WILDGOOSE.—Fine girl, by Jove! (*To her.*) Ma'am, your most obedient. (*Aside.*) I wonder if she knows me. What shall I say to her?—She's devilish handsome. (*To her.*) A cold day, ma'am.

EMMA BELTON.—Yes, sir.

WILDGOOSE (*aside*).—Hem!—a full stop. (*To her.*) The frost seems likely to continue, ma'am.

EMMA BELTON.—Yes, sir.

WILDGOOSE (*aside*).—Yes, sir! She seems as if she couldn't say "No" to anything. (*To her.*) The Opera full on Saturday, ma'am?

EMMA BELTON.—I don't know really, sir. I do not go there.

WILDGOOSE (*aside*).—Deuced silly—but what eyes! (*To her.*) Pray, ma'am, do you ever read the newspapers?

EMMA BELTON.—Sometimes, sir.

WILDGOOSE.—Did you take notice of the account they gave yesterday of a riot at the Opera?

EMMA BELTON.—Yes, sir. A young gentleman of fashion was treated very severely in the paragraph.

WILDGOOSE.—Yes—a Mr Wildgoose. Do you know anything of this Wildgoose, ma'am?

EMMA BELTON.—I have heard him spoken of as a very singular young gentleman, sir—very eccentric, is he not? Always doing something odd?

WILDGOOSE.—Upon my soul, she's a sensible girl.

EMMA BELTON.—I believe, sir, he drives a remarkable cabriolet about town.

WILDGOOSE.—Yes, ma'am. Did you ever hear anything particular about him?—Sad dog, isn't he?

EMMA BELTON.—I've heard that he's very wild, sir.

WILDGOOSE.—Upon my life, she has a great deal of wit.

Enter LADY FALKLAND and LOUISA.

WILDGOOSE.—Good morning, ladies. You'll die of laughing—such an adventure!

LOUISA.—You are always meeting with adventures, Mr Wildgoose.

WILDGOOSE.—This young lady has been giving me an account of myself, and not a very flattering one. I didn't know till to-day that I bore so bad a character.

LADY FALKLAND.—A bad character! Really, Mr Wildgoose, I have always heard you spoken of as a person of an excellent heart.

WILDGOOSE (*aside*).—Excellent heart! She hasn't half the wit of little modesty there. (*Aloud.*) Well, Lady Falkland, I hope this young lady will not alter your opinion. But you are engaged, ladies—I'll take my leave. (*Apart to EMMA.*) If they ask you anything about the row at the Opera the other night, don't spare me. (*Aside.*) She's deuced handsome—I should like to know who she is. (*Exit.*)

LADY FALKLAND.—Has Mrs Lamode sent my bill as I desired?

EMMA BELTON (*opening her reticule, and giving one of two letters*).—Yes, my lady, here it is.

LADY FALKLAND.—This is not for me—this letter is addressed to Mr Belton.

EMMA BELTON (*confused*).—To Mr Belton? Oh—I beg your ladyship's pardon—this is for your ladyship (*offering the other*).

LADY FALKLAND.—Stay, child—do you know Mr Belton?

EMMA BELTON (*embarrassed*).—He—I—he is acquainted with Mrs Lamode, my lady—a customer, I believe.

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—A customer! (*To her*). But do you know him.

EMMA BELTON.—I—I am—but just come from the country, Madam, and—

LADY FALKLAND.—You don't answer my question, child—you tremble. (*Aside to LOUISA.*) Louisa, there's something wrong here.

LOUISA (*aside to LADY FALKLAND*).—She seems to be innocence itself—I am quite interested for her. (*To Emma*.) My good girl, why were you fixed upon to deliver this letter to Mr Belton?

EMMA BELTON.—I don't know, Madam. I was told to deliver it into his own hands. Pray be pleased to return it to me.

LADY FALKLAND.—I have a great mind to open the letter, Louisa.

EMMA BELTON.—Not for the world, my dear lady! If you open it I shall be ruined.

LADY FALKLAND.—If I do *not*, my dear, I fear you may. (*To LOUISA.*) She *must* be innocent—yet her evident anxiety. Whatever may be the consequence, I'll open it. (*She opens and reads.*) Heavens! read this! (*To LOUISA.*) 'Tis as I supposed. That wretch Lamode!

LOUISA (*looking at the letter*).—Detestable creature !

LADY FALKLAND.—Well, my dear, this letter convinces me that you are ignorant of its contents. You must not think of going to Mr Belton's.

EMMA BELTON.—Indeed I must, my lady. He is—he is—

LOUISA.—Well—proceed.

EMMA BELTON.—He is—oh—you are both so good, I'm sure I may trust you—you will not betray me—Mr Belton is—my brother.

LADY FALKLAND.—Your brother!

EMMA BELTON.—My story is short, Madam. My father, who was a clergyman in Devonshire, after spending his little property to educate and support my brother, died, and left my mother and myself in indigent circumstances. (*She weeps.*)

LADY FALKLAND.—Compose yourself, my sweet girl.

EMMA BELTON.—I came up to town in the hope of being able to support my mother by my industry, and as repeated letters to my brother had never excited even sympathy with our distress, I gladly embraced this opportunity (offered to me so unexpectedly by Mrs Lamode) to try what powers of persuasion my tears might have with him.

LADY FALKLAND.—I must speak with you on this letter, my sweet young friend. As for your brother—

Enter Servant.

SERVANT.—Mr Belton, my lady.

EMMA BELTON.—Oh, madam, if I see him here I shall sink with terror—let me retire.

Enter BELTON.

LOUISA (*to EMMA*).—Hush!—put your handkerchief to your face, and leave the rest to Lady Falkland and me.

BELTON.—Lady Falkland, I—but I fear I intrude—you are engaged.

LOUISA.—No, indeed—here are none but friends, Mr Belton. That is a young lady to whom my sister has lately attached herself. She is so unfortunate as to be thrown upon the world by a near relative—a brother—from whom she had a right to expect everything.

BELTON (*aside*).—A brother! (*Aloud*.) Indeed! Poor young woman! I am interested for her. (*Aside*.) I must take the tone of the company, I see—all soul and sentiment.

LADY FALKLAND.—I knew you would pity her, Mr Belton—every man who, like yourself, is a brother, must feel—

BELTON.—A brother, madam? I—

LADY FALKLAND.—Yes—a person lately from Devonshire informed me that you have a sister—

BELTON (*aside*).—From Devonshire?—A sister? What can she mean?—(*looking furtively at EMMA—then aloud*)—Oh dear no—I never had either sister or brother—I have not a single relative living.

LADY FALKLAND.—Indeed! And yet the person I allude to seemed well acquainted with your name.

BELTON.—Oh—now I recollect, I have heard of some persons of my name in Devonshire—but they are of another family.

LADY FALKLAND.—You are acquainted with them, then?

BELTON (*again looking with curiosity towards EMMA*).—No—I may have seen them, but I don't suppose I should know any of them if I were in the same room with them.

LADY FALKLAND.—Perhaps not—especially as they try to conceal themselves from notice. (*To EMMA*.) Come, my dear—I wish to have some conversation with you. (*To BELTON*.) I shall leave my sister to entertain you till dinner. (*Exeunt LADY FALKLAND and EMMA*.)

LOUISA.—What a task has Lady Falkland imposed on me, Mr Belton! I must positively do for once what you wits accuse us poor women of doing always—invoke the assistance of Art. Sir Frederick has just bought some fine pictures which you have not yet seen. Come—we shall just have time to look at them before dinner—(*aside*)—and then I'll prepare a dessert for you that you little dream of. (*Exeunt.*)

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE—*Wildgoose's house. Wildgoose and Frank.*

WILDGOOSE.—Yes, yes—it's plain enough—Belton has been hoaxing me about this girl from the country—she never came near the place. Not that I care much about it. The truth is, I don't see any fun in making a poor girl miserable for life merely by way of amusing oneself. But one must do as other people do.

FRANK.—But, sir, as you have come to the resolution of being ruined yourself in such a hurry, you would scarcely have had leisure to ruin the young lady.

WILDGOOSE.—Why, Frank, I find ruination is the only short road to notoriety now-a-days. It's quite disreputable for a young fellow like me to live within his income. If I pay my debts much longer I shan't have a fashionable friend left.

FRANK (*aside*).—And so, while half the town are spending other people's money to appear rich, *we* are to squander our own in trying to be thought poor!

WILDGOOSE.—It's deuced unlucky that I've been so punctual in paying my bills.

FRANK.—Oh—that won't signify much, sir. People will say you did it to get double credit. I call'd upon Truefit, your tailor, this morning, sir.

WILDGOOSE.—Oh—hang that fellow! he's servility per-

sonified. If a customer were to kick him, he'd turn round and bow to him for the compliment. I suppose he persisted in having had no time to make out his bill.

FRANK.—Ah, sir—that was while he thought you wanted to pay it. But the moment I told him you hoped he'd put it off for another year or two he swore he'd proceed for it directly. And I'm in great hopes he'll have you arrested this very day.

WILDGOOSE.—That's all right. But I hear voices below—who is it, Frank?

FRANK.—Mr Issachar, sir, the dandy Jew money-lender, that you told me to send for to help you to ruin yourself. He's giving his list of messages to his man, as usual, to let people know what a world of business and pleasure he has to get through at the same moment.

Enter ISSACHAR in a dandy dress. Exit FRANK.

ISSACHAR (*speaking to one without, as he enters*).—And Shimon—tell Sir Thomas Try-it-on I shall vait on him vit de needful in de afternoon. Mr Wildgoose, I'm rejoished to see you—and Shimon—give my respects to Lady Bloomsbury, and I shall be delighted to attend her ladyship to the Opera this evening—I ask pardon, Mr Wildgoose—and Shimon—send Nathan to the City for dat polishy—and dat's all—stay—Shimon—and call in Tavishstock street for my new masquerade dress—and—Shimon—be sure to be back here vit a cab in half an hour. Now I am at your shervice, Mr Wildgoose.

WILDGOOSE.—Why, Issachar, how the deuce do you contrive to keep up the two opposite characters, of a man of business and a man of pleasure at the same time? Either of those pursuits is generally quite enough of itself fully to occupy one of us ordinary mortals.

ISSACHAR.—Oh Mr Wildgoose, you flattersh me! But it's de vay vit all my fashionable friends. I am such a favorite

vit peoples of quality dat I often gets ten per shent more on vat I lends, for doing dem de favor to help dem spend it.

WILDGOOSE.—How kind of you! But you've always an eye to business.

ISSACHAR.—Yes—always has an eye to bishness. Talking of bishness, I hope you vants some ready money, Mr Wildgoose, to carry out this ruination plan that Mr Frank tells me of. Not that I comprehends a young gentleman wanting to be ruined before his time. But if you vants a tousand or two, I'll write you a check for it directly.

WILDGOOSE.—Not at present, Issachar, but perhaps I may shortly.

ISSACHAR.—De shooner de better—I knows your estate is goot—

WILDGOOSE.—But I hope you don't tell any body so?

ISSACHAR.—No, no—I shake's my head and cries, "very pat!"

WILDGOOSE.—That's good.

ISSACHAR.—Dat you are so disshipated—so extravagant.

WILDGOOSE.—Thank you, my good friend.

ISSACHAR.—Dat I wouldn't trust you vit a shilling.

WILDGOOSE.—I am under the greatest obligations to you.

ISSACHAR.—In short, I swears dat you're regularly done up.

WILDGOOSE.—You make me quite happy, I declare—but are you sure people believe you?

ISSACHAR.—Oh, yesh—ven vonce I say it's all up vit a man, nobody doubts it.

Enter FRANK.

FRANK.—Sir, here's your steward, Mr Trusty, come to pay you some rents. I hear him hobbling up stairs.

WILDGOOSE.—Zounds! what shall I do? If the old fellow meets Issachar here, I shall be ruined!

ISSACHAR.—Vell, and ishn't dat vat you vants?

WILDGOOSE.—But I mean I shall be ruined in reality. The old fool will tell my uncle, and you know the surest recommendation to a place in a miser's will is, that you are not in want of money.

ISSACHAR.—True as an oracle, Mr Wildgoose.

WILDGOOSE.—You see my situation, Issachar. So just step into the next room for a few minutes, will you? Trusty's such a regular, particular, punctual, honest old scoundrel!—whilst that fellow manages my affairs I couldn't ruin myself if I tried ever so!

ISSACHAR (*aside*).—Oh, the old villain!—my blood rishes at him!

WILDGOOSE.—I am really quite distressed that the old fellow should bring me my rents just at this moment.

ISSACHAR.—Your distresh is of a mighty shingular nature, Mr Wildgoose—it vera sheldom happens at houses vere I visits! (*Exit ISSACHAR at a room-door.*)

Enter TRUSTY.

WILDGOOSE.—Well, Trusty—you're welcome to town, my old friend.

TRUSTY.—Ah! sir—I believe you—I dare say I am welcome—(*archly taking out a bag of money and showing it.*) I called upon your honour at eight o'clock this morning, thinking to find you up, but they told me you were only just gone to bed.

WILDGOOSE.—Why, yes, Trusty—business of a particular nature detained me—

TRUSTY.—Business of a very particular nature indeed, I should think, to keep you up all night! Your poor dear father, sir—but I beg pardon. Ah—here are some of his remains, sir—(*pointing to the bag.*) Poor gentleman! it grieved him to leave them behind him. You'll find the money right, I believe, sir.

WILDGOOSE.—No doubt. And how does my good uncle, eh Trusty?

TRUSTY.—Quite hearty, sir. There's only one thing that troubles the old gentleman—he's sadly afraid you don't keep good company, sir.

WILDGOOSE.—Give my duty to him, Master Trusty, and assure him I keep the best company in town.

TRUSTY.—I will, sir, I will. But you can't wonder at your uncle's fears, sir. This London is such a profligate place! I dare say your honour knows it to be so.

WILDGOOSE.—I do, indeed, Trusty. But as to the friends I associate with, they are a set of men so exemplary in their conduct—

TRUSTY.—Men of business, I suppose, who mind the main chance.

WILDGOOSE.—Mind the main chance? Yes—many of them, so anxious about the “main chance” that they are at it early and late—all night long sometimes.

TRUSTY.—Lackaday—that must be very fatiguing.

WILDGOOSE.—Oh—they find a pleasure in it—*such* young men!—quite models, I assure you, Trusty.

Enter FRANK.

FRANK.—Sir Harry Headlong, sir.

WILDGOOSE (*aside to FRANK*).—Confusion! Why the devil did you let him in?

FRANK.—Some people in the hall told him you were at home, sir. He's talking with them now. Bailiffs, I think, sir.

TRUSTY.—Is this gentleman one of the models your honour spoke of?

WILDGOOSE.—Why, I think I shall make him one soon. To say the truth, Trusty, he's a little wild at present. But I hope I shall reclaim him. You must know I had appointed

him to come here to-day on purpose that I might give him a lecture.

TRUSTY.—And yet your honour did not seem to wish him to come in.

WILDGOOSE.—Why, I'm sorry, as you happen to be here, Trusty.

TRUSTY.—Oh! never mind me, sir—I'll give him a lecture myself, if you like.

WILDGOOSE.—By no means, Trusty. One must observe a little delicacy in these things, you know. Suppose you were to step into the next room. I'll soon despatch him. (TRUSTY goes towards the room where ISSACHAR is.) No—no—not there—the other room, good Trusty.

TRUSTY.—Ah! your honour—I don't know much of the ways of your house. (*Exit.*)

WILDGOOSE.—No! I'm very glad you don't, honest Master Trusty. How cursed unlucky, Headlong coming just now!—he'll blow up my plans, to a certainty.

Re-enter TRUSTY.

TRUSTY.—I beg pardon, your honour, but you forgot to give me a receipt. I believe I have a stamp in my pocket-book (*sitting down, and taking out his spectacles*).

WILDGOOSE.—Zounds! man—I'll give you a receipt by-and-bye.

TRUSTY.—Well, your honour, I beg pardon—but one can't be too particular in business (*puts the bag of money in his pocket, and exit*).

Enter SIR HARRY HEADLONG.

WILDGOOSE (*in a low voice*).—Ah Headlong—I'm glad to see you.

SIR HARRY.—And I should be glad to *hear* you—why, what the devil—have you lost your voice?—a cold—eh?

WILDGOOSE.—In consequence of sitting in the draught of that closet door (*pointing to where TRUSTY is*). Come a little further this way, will you.—Well—where have you been for this week past, eh—Headlong?

SIR HARRY.—Been?—oh, in high feather, my old boy! No fellow enjoys life more than I do. Tell you what I've been up to this last week. Monday a lot of us—Fred. Frolick, Tom Scampley, Charley Challenge, and I forget who besides, started from Crockford's after dinner, in an omnibus and six, for Greenwich Fair. Capital fun—finished the night by kicking up a glorious row in Richardson's booth. Frolick got three of his front teeth knocked out by the Ghost in *Hamlet*, for trying to kiss his wife, “the chaste Ophelia.” Such a capital set to! Frolick, you know, is a goodish hand with the gloves—but he had no chance with the Ghost!

WILDGOOSE (*aside*).—Trusty will certainly hear him; he's got a voice like a speaking-trumpet. (*To him.*) Well, but—

SIR HARRY.—Stop—I've not told you half yet. Tuesday I backed my housekeeper's tabby cat to run a mile on Blackheath against Ned Wildfire's pet monkey for a hundred—beat him hollow, though tabby carried weight—ha! ha!

WILDGOOSE.—Carried weight? How d'ye mean?

SIR HARRY.—Why her kitten in her mouth, all the way! Wednesday—let's see—what was it on Wednesday?—oh—I remember—back'd myself for fifty to row Lord Funny's new wherry against Bill Bang of Hungerford, from Westminster to Vauxhall and back—and beat him by a length!—ha! ha! ha! his own length, by Jove!

WILDGOOSE.—His own length?

SIR HARRY.—Ay—just as he was beating me in a canter close by the Penitentiary, I managed to whip my right skull

cleverly under his left arm, and canted him into the water as clean as a whistle.

WILDGOOSE.—The deuce!—and was he drowned?

SIR HARRY.—I don't know—I dare say he was—I forgot to ask. Isn't that life, old boy?—eh?

WILDGOOSE (*aside*).—It's of no use trying to stop him. (*To him.*) Well—the rest of the week?

SIR HARRY.—Oh, let's see—ay—Thursday and Friday I drove the Age to Brighton and back—only two accidents and one overturn, both ways. Got among a drove of pigs that *would* get into the way—only killed three, maimed four, and broke the off-leader's knees—cost me fifty to pay the damages—never mind—nothing like it—eh?

WILDGOOSE.—Well, but my dear Headlong—

SIR HARRY.—Coming back, turned the coach smack into a river! No fault of mine! A fat farmer's wife flung herself plump down before their heads—on purpose, I'll be sworn. No wonder the tits took fright!

WILDGOOSE.—And to close the week?—

SIR HARRY.—Oh!—I finished the week as many people begin it—up in the clouds.

WILDGOOSE.—Up in the clouds!—how do you mean?

SIR HARRY.—Why, I gave Green twenty pounds to let me go up with him in his balloon. Didn't like it much, though—so cursed quiet up in the clouds—nothing going on—no life—no spirit—no fun—as stupid as Harley street, or Edinburgh on a Sunday. Good sport on coming down, though—within an ace of breaking all our necks from the top of an oak in Epping Forest. Got down safe, though, at last; slept *al fresco* with a gang of gipsies, and came up to town yesterday morning as sound as a bell. Isn't that life, old boy?—eh?

WILDGOOSE (*aside*).—He'll never go. (*To him.*) I thought you were to be at the House to-day, to vote for Sir

Simon Scamper's private enclosure bill—don't let me keep you—

SIR HARRY.—Why, I did promise him, but I'll forget it, and stay with you.

WILDGOOSE.—Oh, I would not detain you from business for the world.

SIR HARRY.—Nonsense—never mind the House—I've got lots of things to say to you, Tom. I find you're ruined—(*whistles*). By-the-bye, when does that new four-in-hand you talked about make its appearance? But, damn it, I'm nothing of a morning without a glass of champagne. Order a bottle, will you? (*Rings the bell, and sits down to a table. Enter FRANK.*) Bring us a bottle of champagne, Frank.

WILDGOOSE (*aside*).—Worse and worse! The savage is set in for it.

Enter Servant with wine.

SIR HARRY.—Mortgaged pretty deep, I suppose?—over head and ears in annuities—eh? I saw Issachar's cab at your door as I came in, besides the bums.

WILDGOOSE.—Hush, my dear Headlong! do speak lower! I can't bear a noise—the cold I got from that closet door so affects my head!

SIR HARRY.—Egad, I think your head is affected indeed! I never saw a fellow look so queer in my life. Why, you don't mind being ruined, do you? I was ruined before I came into my estate—dipped it a thousand a-year before I left college. Come, Tom, "here's towards you," as our friends below stairs say.

WILDGOOSE.—Hush! hush! my dear Headlong!

SIR HARRY.—It's very well to say, "Hush!" to a *capias*, but it can't be done. Besides, who cares about an execution? Why, I've had one in my place these three weeks. One of

the fellows is a capital hand—plays the hurdy-gurdy on the tongs, twists the poker round his neck, and can eat raw beef-steaks against any bulldog in Westminster. I declare I shall be quite sorry to part with him.

WILDGOOSE.—Come, you don't drink. (*Aside.*) What shall I do to get rid of him?

SIR HARRY.—But I say, Wildgoose, haven't you large expectations from an old uncle?

WILDGOOSE (*speaking loud, for TRUSTY to hear.*).—An uncle!—Yes, one of the best, the worthiest, the most respectable—

SIR HARRY.—Halloo! Why, you've recovered your voice all of a sudden.

WILDGOOSE.—Come, a bumper to my excellent uncle's health.

SIR HARRY.—His *ill* health, you mean. Well, here's to his speedy dissolu—

WILDGOOSE (*stopping him*).—Hold! that toast was to my good uncle's health—the next is to his and my faithful steward, honest Thomas Trusty.

SIR HARRY.—Why, you told me the other day that your steward was a snivelling, canting old rascal—

WILDGOOSE (*trying to silence him*).—Really, Headlong—

SIR HARRY.—But I hope the old hunks means to die soon, Tom. You've no time to lose. I saw two bailiffs below—old friends of mine—in possession, I suppose.

Enter TRUSTY from the closet.

TRUSTY.—Bailiffs in possession! Heaven defend us! I believe Old Nick is in possession! These are your men of business, are they, Mr Wildgoose!—your models!—at it at all hours! Your friend must have served an early apprenticeship, to begin business before he left school.

WILDGOOSE.—Distraction!

SIR HARRY.—One of your duns, I suppose, Tom! Come, this is a new idea, a man locking up his creditors in his own house. I wish I could serve mine so—but I’m afraid my apartments wouldn’t hold half of ‘em!

TRUSTY.—Aye, aye, young gentleman, your uncle shall know of this. And you’ve the Jews about you too, have you? Ah!—Jews are like undertakers’ mutes—when once you see *them* at a man’s door, you may be sure it’s all over with him. I hate the sight of a money-lending Jew.

Enter ISSACHAR from the other closet.

ISSACHAR.—Mr Wildgoose, I can’t stay in de shame housh vit dat profligate old fellow—

SIR HARRY.—Halloo! What are we to have next, Tom? Dam’ me, this is high fun!—this is life! I like this.

WILDGOOSE (*aside to ISSACHAR*).—My dear Issachar, stay one moment—I may have occasion for you.

TRUSTY.—I’ve only one question to ask you, young gentleman, before I go—are you really quite ruined?

SIR HARRY.—Well, that’s a plain question, I must say. Answer him, Tom, by all means, for the satisfaction of the company.

WILDGOOSE (*half aside*).—Now, is it best for me to be ruined or not?—let me consider.

ISSACHAR.—Stuff! do it vidout consideration.

WILDGOOSE (*aside*).—Yes—it shall be so, but I shall want your assistance, Issachar, to complete my ruin—you understand?

ISSACHAR.—Pray, make haste, sir, den, for I’ve two or tree oder gentlemans vaiting for me, as vants my assistance for de same purpose. Oh, dere is Shimon coming for me—I can’t

stay a moment longer. (*To Trusty.*) Oh, you old profligate ! (*Exit.*)

WILDGOOSE (*to Trusty.*).—Well, my old friend, I'll answer your question—

TRUSTY.—You may save yourself the trouble, sir—the Jew's words have answered me. Ah, your good father, my old master—

SIR HARRY.—Eh, Wildgoose, what's all this?—His old master—

WILDGOOSE.—His old friend, he means. (*Aside.*) Sdeath ! I must bring myself off somehow—I have it ! (*To SIR HARRY.*) This, Sir Harry, is no less less a man than the Honourable Tom Trusty.

TRUSTY.—Why, I believe I deserve the title of “honourable” as well as many who wear it; but as there is sometimes a distinction between an “honourable” and an “honest” man, I am content to be called honest Thomas Trusty.

WILDGOOSE.—Well, then, “honest” let it be.

SIR HARRY.—With all my heart. Honest Tom, here's t'ye. A keen sportsman, I suppose?

WILDGOOSE.—At everything, from a stag to a badger—from foxes and hares to farmers' wives and daughters.

TRUSTY.—Lord ! Lord !

WILDGOOSE.—His father died the other day at a hundred, and disinherited this young dog because he couldn't be content with two mistresses. Bring more wine, Frank.

TRUSTY.—Mercy on us ! Why, your honour—Mr Wildgoose—

SIR HARRY.—But how the devil did he come in the closet? And why in this dress?

WILDGOOSE.—A sly dog ! You wouldn't think it, but he's disguised for an intrigue to-night. We got the costume from Tavistock street—

SIR HARRY.—From Monmouth street, I should think, by the look of it.

WILDGOOSE.—He's the life of a masquerade. Come, Trusty, don't hum us any longer, but drink, man, drink!

SIR HARRY.—Aye, and give us a song—come!

TRUSTY.—I sing! Heaven bless us! I—

Enter FRANK.

FRANK.—A carriage has stopped at the door, sir—I think it is Madame Beaumonde's.

WILDGOOSE.—Madame Beaumonde's! (*Aside.*) That's lucky—she'll tell all the town that I'm done up, and it'll be the making of me.

FRANK.—The lady and Mr Idleton are coming up, sir.

SIR HARRY.—Then I'll go down, and so your servant, gentlemen. I hate talking without drinking—one might as well be at the House of Commons. (*Exit.*)

TRUSTY.—Well, your honour, I believe I had better go, too. As I am such a profligate old fellow, I suppose you won't like to trust me with the lady.

WILDGOOSE.—My dear Trusty, I must explain all this to you. Don't leave the house till I see you. Besides, I want your advice.

TRUSTY.—Ah, sir! then it must be all over with you. I never knew a young man acknowledge that he wanted the advice of an old one till his case was desperate.—(*Exit.*)

WILDGOOSE.—Frank, a whim strikes me. I should like to know what people say of my supposed situation. I'll conceal myself in this closet. It has already exposed me to my friends—it now owes me the good turn of exposing my friends to me. Tell them I'm out. 'Gad! 'tis not every man would take so much pains to hear of his faults. (*Exit into the closet.*)

Enter MADAME BEAUMONDE and IDLETON.

FRANK.—I am very sorry for the mistake of the servants, madam; but Mr Wildgoose is unfortunately out of the way at present.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Why, his servants seem to be as odd persons as himself. To say one's not at home when one is, I have often found convenient enough since I've been in England; but to say one's at home when one's out, is a singularity I can't see the merit of. But I suppose it is one of Mr Wildgoose's eccentricities. Well, you'll give my compliments to your master, and tell him I called to apologise for not being able to receive him to-morrow evening, as I am unexpectedly called upon to leave town for Paris. (*Aside.*) So at least I mean everybody to believe.

IDLETON.—Yes—and tell him that I called to—to—why did I call, Madame Beaumonde?—I declare I quite forget.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—I believe it was merely your polite attention to me, Mr Idleton.

IDLETON.—Oh—ay—I dare say it was—but it's cursed troublesome to have walked up stairs only to walk down again.

Enter KNOWALL.

KNOWALL.—Frank, tell your master I'm very sorry for him—very sorry indeed.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Why, what has happened to him, Mr Knowall?

KNOWALL.—Oh—only a crash! I suppose you know how it is below? The house full of bailiffs!

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Bailiffs in Mr Wildgoose's house! Why, I thought he had more money than he knew what to do with.

KNOWALL.—Oh—a fresh pair every day for this fortnight past!

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Surprising!

KNOWALL.—Not at all! I knew it would happen—I could have foretold it six months ago, only I don't like to mention these things.

IDLETON.—Yes—yours is the only safe way of prophesying, Knowall; you never mention your predictions till they are accomplished.

KNOWALL.—Nay—haven't I given Wildgoose a thousand friendly hints? I made a point of dining with him two or three times a week on purpose.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—And his table, I suppose, was so crowded by people anxious to give him good advice, that the poor man is at last ruined by the considerate care of his friends.

KNOWALL.—Well—I really am grieved about poor Wildgoose.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—But they say, Mr Knowall, nothing alleviates grief so much as imparting it to others; so that *you*, who relate the misfortunes of your friends to every one you meet, must find your consolations overbalance your sorrows.
(*Exeunt MADAME BEAUMONDE and IDLETON.*)

KNOWALL.—Sneering devil! She's as satirical as Belton. I wish he'd marry her. They'd be like two wild cats in the same cage—they'd worry each other to death before the end of the honeymoon.

Enter TRUSTY.

Here's one of Wildgoose's creditors, I suppose.

TRUSTY.—Heyday! The young gentleman gone off!

KNOWALL (*aside*).—Gone off! I was not aware of that.
(*To TRUSTY.*) Oh yes—he set off last night—he's in France by this time.

TRUSTY.—In France!—no, no—I know better than that.

KNOWALL.—Do you, sir? I should be glad of a little con-

versation with you. For my part, I know nothing of Mr Wildgoose's affairs—indeed, I never interfere in anybody's private concerns. (*They sit down to the table.*) Come, sir (*taking a glass of wine*), here's to our friend Wildgoose's better circumstances. (*Drinks.*) Ah sir—Mr Wildgoose has been an unthinking, prodigal young man. Such entertainments as he used to give! Such wines! (*Rings the bell, and enter FRANK.*) Frank, I don't think this Champagne is so good as I have drunk here before.

FRANK.—Give me leave to try another cork, sir. Or will you taste our Burgundy, sir? it's excellent.

KNOWALL.—Aye—let's have a bottle. (*Exit FRANK.*) 'Tis lamentable, sir, to see one's friends ruining themselves daily, without one's being able to prevent them.

Re-enter FRANK with the wine.

FRANK (*aside to KNOWALL*).—My master desired me, if you called, sir, to say that he'd be much obliged to you if you could make it convenient to pay him the hundred pounds you borrowed of him.

KNOWALL (*half aside*).—Eh?—Oh—I'll settle that, Frank, to your master's satisfaction.

TRUSTY.—I presume, sir, Mr Wildgoose is indebted to you?

KNOWALL.—Why as to that, sir, whatever money transactions may have passed between Mr Wildgoose and me, I am not the man to trouble him about them—especially at a time like this.

TRUSTY.—Ah sir! you *are* a friend—so unlike the generality of the world—who will eat and drink at a man's expense, borrow his money, and, when they have ruined him, be the first to revile him.

KNOWALL (*confused*).—Very true indeed!

TRUSTY.—Come, sir—though I am an old man, age has not extinguished all my indignation against roguery. Here's con-

fusion to all such scoundrels! (*Takes up a glass of wine.*) You don't fill your glass, sir.

KNOWALL (*confused*).—No—I've had enough. (*Aside.*) I don't half like this old fellow. I shall be off. (*Going.*)

TRUSTY.—If you please, sir, I'll take a memorandum of your name and the amount of your debt, to give it Mr Wildgoose. A man in distress meets with so few friends, that he should acknowledge their kindness if it be but for its singularity.

KNOWALL (*aside*).—Is he sneering at me? (*To him.*) Pray Mr—what's-your-name—why are you so interested about Mr Wildgoose?—does he owe you money?

TRUSTY.—No sir—my errand here is to bring him money.

KNOWALL.—Oh, ho! a money-lender!—a usurer! Why you old cent.-per-cent. sinner—you retail dealer in rapacity—you vile invader of the chartered rights of the synagogue! I felt that you were a money-lender the moment I entered the room. And then the cant by which you try to conceal it—like the whining of the hyena over her prey. Pah! I couldnt stay in the same room with such a fellow! (*Exit.*)

TRUSTY.—Very pleasant all this, Mr Frank! Why, I've undergone as many transformations within this hour as the clown in a pantomime. I began as plain Thomas Trusty, the old steward. I soon expanded into an "Honourable" with a large estate. Then I grew very profligate all of a sudden—found a father—lost a fortune—and became a debtor of my young master. From his debtor I presently sprouted into his creditor—then into a usurer—and last of all into a hyena! What I'm to become next, heaven knows—but I hope to goodness I shall be allowed to resume my own shape in the course of the evening, and go to bed as I rose—honest Thomas Trusty.

FRANK.—Never you fear, Mister Trusty—we shall all come right at last. (*Exit TRUSTY.*) You may come out now, sir.

(Enter WILDGOOSE from the closet)

Well, sir, how do you like your discoveries?

WILDGOOSE.—Delightful! The rascality of my friends is quite refreshing. I shall be vilified and traduced by the whole town at last—and that's what I call true fame. Let them only talk about me, and I don't care what they say. Like a boy's kite—the stronger the adverse breeze, the higher I'll fly. I'll do something next that shall be ridiculous enough to make people forget the Tournament. (*Exeunt*).

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE—*Sir Frederick Falkland's.*

LADY FALKLAND and LOUISA.

LADY FALKLAND.—No, Louisa, nothing can justify the behaviour of Sir Frederick.

LOUISA.—Except his wish to oblige you. You were angry at his behaving too well to you; at last he has given you the satisfaction of behaving ill; and now that don't please you!

LADY FALKLAND.—Had his ill humour proceeded from jealousy, every harsh word would have been a cordial to my heart. But so far from that, he saw me actually coquet with Captain Belton, with a degree of indifference that stung me to the soul.

LOUISA.—Poor Lady Falkland! Your case is singularly hard, to be sure! Only think of having a husband who places such implicit confidence in your honour and prudence that he will not believe his own eyes if they tell him anything to your disparagement.

LADY FALKLAND.—Alas! Louisa, I have lost his heart, and I will not be a restraint upon his inclinations. Do you know, my dear, I have seriously thought of a separation!

LOUISA.—And suppose Sir Frederick should have been beforehand with you?

LADY FALKLAND (*eagerly*).—Good heavens! can he have any such idea? Can he indeed think of parting from me?

LOUISA.—Not that I know of, I assure you. But what would you have the poor man do? You say you have thought of it?

LADY FALKLAND.—Yes, I have seriously debated the matter in my mind, and—

LOUISA.—Ah, my dear sister, you may debate till you are weary. Love, the lord paramount of your heart, sits proudly secure of his majority, and will carry the question by a nod, in spite of all the opposition that Reason or Passion can bring against him.

LADY FALKLAND.—Louisa, I am convinced that I have a rival. That Parisian Syren has enchanted him. I have lost his affection, and will never submit to be a pensioner on his pity.

LOUISA—Well, here he comes, and I shall leave you together. (*Exit* LOUISA.—LADY FALKLAND *sits down and takes a book.*)

Enter SIR FREDERICK.

SIR FREDERICK (*aside*).—There she sits. How charming she looks! What shall I say to her? (*To her.*) Lady Falkland, I should apologise for intruding on your privacy, but—(*she looks round at him*)—but—have you seen my—my card-case?

LADY FALKLAND.—Psha!

SIR FREDERICK (*aside*).—Haughty, insensible woman! I'm resolved not to flatter her pride.

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—He is much mistaken if he expects me to make the first advances.

SIR FREDERICK (*aside and embarrassed*).—I must speak to her; and yet how awkward it is to acknowledge one's faults! I could tell her all her failings now with the utmost fluency, but when I want to speak of my own—somehow I cannot get a syllable out for the soul of me. How ridiculous I must look in her eyes! I can't bear it any longer. (*Exit.*)

LADY FALKLAND.—Gone ! without another word ! I have been to blame. Why did I let him go ? Why did I not speak ?

Enter Servant.

SERVANT.—My lady, here is a young person from Mrs Lamode's—she has brought home your ladyship's dress for the drawing-room to-morrow.

LADY FALKLAND.—Go after Sir Frederick.

SERVANT.—My lady, Sir Frederick saw the dress just now as he went out.

LADY FALKLAND.—Say I particularly wish to speak to him.

SERVANT.—Yes, my lady.

LADY FALKLAND.—Tell him—no—don't tell him—that is—

SERVANT.—Tell him that your ladyship *don't* wish to speak with him ?

LADY FALKLAND.—Ah ! here he comes. Leave the room.

SERVANT.—My lady seems to be of two or three minds this morning. (*Exit.*)

LADY FALKLAND.—He is agitated—there must be something to cause this strange uneasiness. (*Sits down, and again takes a book.*)

Re-enter SIR FREDERICK.

SIR FREDERICK (*embarrassed*).—Lady Falkland, I wish to speak to you—that is—to ask you—

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—It's coming at last !

SIR FREDERICK (*still embarrassed*).—To ask you—(*aside*)—what shall I say?—(*aloud*)—to ask you—where you got your new Blenheim ?

LADY FALKLAND.—Psha !

SIR FREDERICK.—Lady Grizzle has been boring me to death for one of the same breed, and—(*after a pause*)—no answer ! (*He gets into a passion, and rings the bell violently.*)

Enter Servant.

(To Servant.) I want—(*aside*)—what the devil do I want?—nothing—go—(*Exit Servant.*) Are you reading anything new, Lady Falkland? (*Approaching her chair.*)

LADY FALKLAND (*significantly*).—A new novel—it is called “Indifference; or, The Fashionable Husband.” (*She goes on reading.*)

SIR FREDERICK (*aside*).—Silent again! One might as well attempt to converse with one’s flute; for, like that, she won’t breathe a sound but what one forces from her. (*Again rings the bell violently—pause—enter Servant.*) Surely no servants were ever so inattentive as mine. Why is not the carriage here?

SERVANT.—I beg your pardon, Sir Frederick—but—it was not ordered.

SIR FREDERICK.—Well, order it then, and let me know the moment it comes.

SERVANT (*to Lady Falkland*).—Madame Beaumonde, my lady, has just called a second time, and was very anxious to know when your ladyship would be at home. (*Exit.*)

LADY FALKLAND.—Again? Twice in half an hour! I fancy her inquiries must be directed to you, Sir Frederick. Perhaps you will see her this evening?—(*watching his reply anxiously.*)

SIR FREDERICK.—I am going to Lady Squanders’, where I may meet her.

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—Going to meet her! I cannot bear this—my pride falls before the strength of my affection. If he did but know how anxiously I wish for a reconciliation! (*She lays down the book and rises from her chair.*)

Enter Servant.

SERVANT.—The carriage is here, Sir Frederick.

SIR FREDERICK.—Already! let it wait. Lady Falkland, I had a glimpse of your new dress just now—I admire it extremely.

LADY FALKLAND.—So do I—(*affectionately*)—it reminds me of my wedding dress, and that, I remember, was your choice.

SIR FREDERICK.—Charming woman! Caroline—(*taking her hand*)—forget that we have quarrelled.

LADY FALKLAND.—Will *you* forget it, Frederick? I fear I have been to blame.

SIR FREDERICK.—Impossible, my dearest! Two minutes ago, indeed, I could have sworn that you had been in the wrong ever since we have been married; but—I know not how it is—there are such irresistible arguments in your eyes that one look at them has convinced me you never were wrong in your life.

LADY FALKLAND.—How sweet is flattery from you! but tell me, Frederick, what is on your mind that you have not imparted to your Caroline? There is something, I am sure.

SIR FREDERICK.—Though I feel secure of your pardon, Caroline, shame will scarcely let me utter it.

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—What can he mean? Have I indeed had a rival?

SIR FREDERICK.—How carefully should we watch the first growth of that poisonous weed, jealousy! (*Aside.*) I'll tell her all my suspicions.

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—Is this a confession of his own feelings, or an endeavour to discover mine?

SIR FREDERICK.—Yes, Caroline—(*taking her hand*)—nothing shall any longer prevent me from declaring that—
(*seeing BELTON enter*)—Sdeath!

Enter BELTON.

BELTON.—Ah! taking a tender adieu! It's odd—but somehow—whether from anticipating the pains or the pleasures of absence—I never yet saw a married couple that were not fond at parting.

LADY FALKLAND.—Parting !

BELTON.—What !—hasn't he told you ? Your charming friend, Madame Beaumonde, returns to France to-morrow, and Sir Frederick has promised to see her safe to Paris. By-the-bye, Falkland, I must trouble you to execute some little commissions for me. (*They talk apart.*)

LADY FALKLAND (*aside*).—Am I in my senses ? To this then it was that his cruel kindness meant to reconcile me ! This was what shame prevented him from uttering ! This, too, was the motive of *her* importunate visits ! Well !—at least my amazement and indignation will supply the place of fortitude, and save me from the mortification of exposing my misery to the cruel cause of it.

SIR FREDERICK (*they come forward*).—Well—but really, Belton, Madame Beaumonde cannot expect me to—

BELTON.—To perform your voluntary promise of attending her ?

SIR FREDERICK.—It is most unfortunate, Caroline, that—that—I did not think of mentioning this to you before—but—

LADY FALKLAND (*constraining herself to calmness*).—Very unfortunate—because I have several commissions for you, and shall scarcely have time to write my letters. However I must conform to circumstances as well as I can. (*Exit.*)

SIR FREDERICK.—Lady Falkland, let me say one word ?

BELTON.—Had you not better follow her, and look over her shoulder while she writes her letters, or she may seal up her heart in a billet-doux, and entrust it to your care, to deliver to some happy Frenchman ! ha ! ha !

SIR FREDERICK.—Psha!—what trifling !

BELTON.—I wonder you allow the poor woman the free use of her eyes ! Why don't you provide her with blinkers, as you do your coach horses, to direct her sight the way you wish ? Lucky for you, Falkland, that your wife is not of a jealous temper.

SIR FREDERICK.—How do you know that she is not jealous?

BELTON.—Jealous? She is a model of a wife—so pliant—so tractable—so confiding—resigns herself to separation without a sigh, if it is for your pleasure!

SIR FREDERICK.—Why, she did take it very quietly, I confess.

BELTON.—Quietly?—Why, you are one soul in two bodies?—like a couple of well-regulated watches, you'll agree as well at a thousand leagues distance, as if you were in the same room together.

SIR FREDERICK.—Curse his sneering!

Enter MADAME BEAUMONDE, announced by a Servant.

MADAME BEAUMONDE (*aside*)—Belton here! I must take care he don't suspect that my pretended journey to Paris is only a *ruse* to frustrate his vile plot against Lady Falkland. (*Aloud*)—Why, Sir Frederick, I have besieged your door for this hour past, and could only gain admittance now by submitting to the barbarism of enquiring for you instead of your wife.

BELTON.—Sir Frederick has been deeply engaged, Madame, in arranging some matters of business with Lady Falkland, previous to his journey.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—His journey!

BELTON.—Rather yours, Madame—my friend could not forget the envied distinction with which you flattered him this morning, of allowing him to attend your steps.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Indeed! I should rather have judged by his present manner that he did not recollect a word of the matter.

SIR FREDERICK.—Nay, Madame Beaumonde, I—(*aside*)—This Belton is my evil genius.

BELTON.—No, you wrong him I assure you—we have just had a friendly dispute on the subject—have'n't we, Falkland?

I know he had some pressing engagements in town, and I would have persuaded him to state it fairly to you—you remember, Falkland, that was my advice.

MADAME BEAUMONDE (*aside*).—His assurance is admirable! and poor Falkland's embarrassment! (*To Sir Frederick*) Am I to understand, Sir Frederick, that you have appointed Mr Belton your interpreter in this weighty affair?

SIR FREDERICK.—Madam, upon an occasion when I find it so difficult to express my feelings, and when sincerity might offend against politeness—

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Oh—I should pardon the error for its singularity.

SIR FREDERICK.—You encourage me to speak with frankness.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—And I set you the example—my tongue is the mirror of my heart—it displays a thousand follies, perhaps, but it does not reflect that worst of deformities—deceit. (*Looking significantly at Belton.*) Folly, like shallow water, honestly discovers its depth at the first glance; but dissimulation, like the treacherous ice, grows less and less transparent in proportion as it conceals the dangerous depth it tempts us to tread. What say you, Mr Belton?

BELTON.—True, madam—and yet all the world are skaiters. We are fond of gliding over a smooth surface. But I beg pardon, Sir Frederick—it is your turn to speak! (*Aside.*) I mustn't let him get off going.

SIR FREDERICK.—Believe me, then, Madame Beaumonde, the pleasure of attending you—

BELTON (*interrupting him gaily.*) Is more than you are able to express. Well, so you told us before.

SIR FREDERICK.—But when I consider—

BELTON.—How you will be envied—to be sure—we agreed upon that.

SIR FREDERICK.—I am compelled to declare—

BELTON.—A declaration in form!

SIR FREDERICK.—In short, madam, I have but one word to add—

BELTON.—Which is (for he'll never get it out unless I help him), that a journey with you to Paris, or a pistol, are his only alternatives. He hinted as much before you came in.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Well, gentlemen, there's no resisting such a duet of eloquence. Sir Frederick, I consent to receive you in my suite. I shall not go to Lady Squander's to-night, so you must sup with me, and bring your interpreter with you. In the meantime I wish to speak to Lady Falkland.

SIR FREDERICK.—Madam—I—I—

BELTON.—You see, madam, words are too poor to express his feelings—so come along, Falkland. (*Exeunt BELTON and SIR FREDERICK.*)

Enter LOUISA and EMMA BELTON.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—My dear Louisa, where is your charming sister?

LOUISA (*coldly*).—I fear, Madame Beaumonde, Lady Falkland is too ill to see you.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—Would she assign that reason for not seeing her physician? Why then for not receiving her friend? And perhaps I may prove both in one. I may have a medicine for curing her malady that you and she little dream of. In short, I must see her.

LOUISA.—You'll find her in her boudoir. (*Exit MADAME BEAUMONDE as to LADY FALKLAND.*) This woman must have some secret reason for thus intruding herself upon my sister. I am resolved to be present at the conversation. (*As she is going out, enter a Servant.*)

SERVANT.—Mr. Wildgoose, madam.

LOUISA.—Show him in. (*Exit Servant.*) Emma, my love,

I shall leave Mr Wildgoose to you for a few minutes. You may employ them in collecting the materials to finish his portrait, which you began so flatteringly just now!

EMMA BELTON.—Dear madam, you will not place me in such a situation.

LOUISA.—Psha! my dear—you have nothing to do but speak ill enough of him, and you win his heart; and with all his eccentricity you'll find it worth the winning, or I'm much mistaken. (*Exit.*)

Enter WILDGOOSE.

WILDGOOSE (*aside*).—Here's that handsome girl again. (*To her.*) I believe, madam, I have had the honour of meeting you here before.

EMMA BELTON.—I'm quite ashamed, sir, to recollect that, not knowing your person, I—

WILDGOOSE.—Ha! ha! ha!—I remember—you are the lady who drew my picture so admirably this morning. (*Aside.*) 'Gad!—I don't know when I've seen so lovely a girl!

EMMA BELTON.—I cannot claim the merit of being the original artist, sir—mine was but a copy from an engraving executed by others.

WILDGOOSE.—Ah, madam, when once the original design of a *good-natured* portrait is completed, the impressions are worked off and circulated by one's particular friends all over the town in a twinkling. One meets with fifty caricatures for one good likeness.

EMMA BELTON.—Yes, for it requires real talent to paint a true likeness, but illnature enables any dauber to draw a caricature.

WILDGOOSE.—And yet there are some characters which, like perfect beauty, cannot be caricatured. Your friends in this house, for instance—Sir Frederick and Lady Falkland are a most charming couple. (*Aside.*) On a first acquaintance one

always speaks well of people's friends ; it is the privilege of intimacy to abuse them.

EMMA BELTON.—Yes, sir—I am told they are universally remarked as being the happiest as well as handsomest couple in the circles of fashion.

WILDGOOSE (*to himself*).—Indeed !—“ universally remarked ”—the “ happiest and handsomest !”—I declare it never struck me before. If I were to get married, what should prevent my wife and I from being “ universally remarked ” in the same way ?

EMMA BELTON.—Lady Falkland is indeed a charming woman.

WILDGOOSE (*still to himself*).—If we should be happy, it's so rare that we should be generally noticed for it. If we should be miserable, no fear but our friends would take care to remark that. If we happened to have a fine family of children, that would be sure to make us noticed ; and if we should chance to have none at all, that would be remarked still more. I declare I did not think marriage could have produced so many subjects for remark.

EMMA BELTON (*aside*).—What a very odd young man !—yet very agreeable.

WILDGOOSE (*aside, after considering a little*).—Yes, I will—I'll declare my passion for her. (*To her.*) You have told me yourself, madam, that I am a very odd kind of a fellow—and so I am—but my oddities are like my clothes ; let me change their fashion ever so often, they have no effect on my heart, which, somehow, I can't help thinking is in the right place. Nothing odd in that, I hope ?

EMMA BELTON.—I trust not, sir.

WILDGOOSE.—You have wit and beauty, madam—and, in a word, I adore you !

EMMA BELTON.—Really, sir, this declaration is so singular—

WILDGOOSE.—Why, ma'am, I should think you must often have heard it before.

EMMA BELTON.—The terms in which you express yourself, sir—

WILDGOOSE.—Are they singular also, madam? At least, they proceed from the heart; and really I think sincerity would be an excellent fashion on these occasions, and quite new. You must be amiable, madam, for you are the friend of Lady Falkland. I only hope that you still have a heart to dispose of, and that you have no fortune.

EMMA BELTON.—I'm much indebted to you for your last wish, sir!

WILDGOOSE.—Why, madam, to woo a lady's fortune without caring for her heart is too much in the common way for me.

EMMA BELTON (*aside*).—There is something strangely pre-possessing about him.

WILDGOOSE.—As to my person, madam—look at me!—My character—but I leave you to draw that. My fortune, which I lay at your feet, is considerable. Besides large expectations from a rich uncle, I am possessed of an unencumbered estate of the value of—

Enter KNOWALL, preceded by a Servant, who announces him to WILDGOOSE.

KNOWALL.—Ah, Wildgoose, I saw your queer cab at the door, and couldn't help coming in to condole with you on your misfortune. I'm excessively sorry—I'm told you're regularly done up—cleaned out—ruined!

WILDGOOSE (*aside to KNOWALL*).—Zounds, Knowall, hold your tongue! It would be particularly awkward for me to be ruined just at this moment.

KNOWALL.—I can't help that—you should have chosen a more convenient opportunity then. But don't mind it—your

case is a very common one—all one's acquaintance are ruined at one time or another—one sees them stripped, one after the other, like the trees in October ; and yet, like the trees, a few months brings them into full leaf again.

WILDGOOSE (*aside to KNOWALL*).—I tell you I wish to be thought in good circumstances.

KNOWALL.—Of course you do—so does every man in your situation, I suppose.

WILDGOOSE (*aside to him*).—Particularly before that lady.

KNOWALL.—Oh ! you want to borrow money of her, perhaps ? Oh-ho ! a female usurer !—what interest do you pay her, Wildgoose—eh ?—(*significantly*.)

WILDGOOSE (*aside to him*).—I'm in love with her, and want to marry her.

KNOWALL.—Ah ! I see—you want to borrow her fortune upon your own personal security !

WILDGOOSE (*aside to him, very sternly*).—I must insist, Mr Knowall, that you immediately unsay everything you have just said.

KNOWALL.—Eh ? Oh, with all my heart—anything to serve a friend—(*aside*)—In such a fighting age as this it's much safer to contradict oneself than other people.—(*To Emma*)—Madam, I am very sorry to find that I have repeated a false report about this gentleman. I assure you, Madam, no man is more anxious than I am to acquire the most certain proofs before I tell a story to the disadvantage of a friend. But, Madam, Mr Wildgoose has fully convinced me—

EMMA BELTON.—And he has fully convinced me Sir—that he has been seeking either to insult or to deceive me. (*Exit.*)

WILDGOOSE.—There !—see what your curs'd unlucky tongue has done.

KNOWALL.—But seriously, Wildgoose, I am sorry for your situation. I protest when I heard of it, I said all I could on the occasion.

WILDGOOSE (*aside*).—Yes—I heard you.

KNOWALL.—But who is this girl?

WILDGOOSE.—Why that I can't exactly tell you at present—(*aside*)—for I don't know myself! (*To him*.) But I hope she *will* be my wife—that is to say if she will marry me in two or three days—I can't wait longer than that—and notwithstanding my ruin, you shall see our marriage signalised by some extraordinary circumstance.

KNOWALL.—What—will it be a happy one?

WILDGOOSE.—I only began my attack two hours ago, and within the week you shall see my brows adorned with the laurels of victory.

KNOWALL (*aside*).—And within the month, perhaps, adorned in another manner, if he's going to marry a woman he don't know. (*To him*.) But what's the lady's name?

WILDGOOSE.—Her name! I wish you could tell me—for I quite forgot to ask her.

KNOWALL.—Well—that's an “extraordinary circumstance,” to begin with!—I have a dozen engagements this evening, Wildgoose, but I can't refuse you my assistance in this matter. I'll ascertain your mistress's name directly. Depend upon it in five minutes you shall know who it is you are going to marry! (*Exit*.)

Enter BELTON, preceded by a Servant.

SERVANT.—I'll tell her ladyship you are here, Sir—but I believe she's engaged. (*Exit on the opposite side*.)

BELTON.—Well, Wildgoose, how am I to interpret your smiles? Will it do? How d'ye like her?

WILDGOOSE (*aside*).—He means the girl he hoaxed me about this morning. I'll turn the tables on him. (*To him*.) Oh! delightful! Such a creature!

BELTON.—You excite my curiosity. Couldn't I see her?

WILDGOOSE.—No—(*aside*)—not unless you had the gift of second sight.

BELTON.—I must introduce her into life. I promised you I would.

WILDGOOSE (*aside*).—Yes—she has not been introduced into it yet, that I know of!

BELTON.—Here comes Knowall, charged as usual, I suppose, with scandal, like a thunder-cloud with inflammable matter, and the first person he meets is sure to serve as a conductor to the mischief.

Enter KNOWALL.

KNOWALL.—Ah! Belton, I called at your lodgings as I came along, and put this letter for you in my pocket. (*To WILDGOOSE, while looking for the letter.*) I can't see any of the family—they are all shut up in their apartments, like bees in winter. I'll try again, though. Oh! here it is. (*Gives the letter to BELTON, and exit.*)

BELTON (*aside*).—My sister's handwriting! the old story, I suppose. (*Opening the letter.*) Confusion!—what can this mean? “Came to town—Mrs Lamode's, the milliner's”—Good heavens!—“sent me to you this morning”—I dread the rest—“was prevented calling on you”—then there are hopes. (*To WILDGOOSE.*) Wildgoose, what time did the girl from Mrs Lamode's call at my lodgings?

WILDGOOSE.—Eh?—oh—at mine you mean? She never came near your's—(*aside*)—that will puzzle him.

BELTON (*reading again*).—“Accident directed me to a more friendly roof”—Good heavens! Wildgoose's house, no doubt—“where I have found that protection which a brother refused to the wretched Emma.” 'Sdeath, sir—(*aside*)—but I must conceal my uneasiness from him—or I shall make matters worse.

WILDGOOSE.—Why, what's the matter, Belton?—you look devilish odd—has anything happened?

BELTON.—A letter on a disagreeable business—but I'll think no more of it. Wildgoose, I can't get this girl out of my head. You say she is young and very handsome.

WILDGOOSE.—Eh?—oh—(*aside*)—I'll keep up the joke against him, however. (*To him.*) Handsome! I believe she is, indeed! I've a pretty good taste, I fancy.

BELTON.—Well—give me a specimen of it—describe her.

WILDGOOSE.—Eh?—describe her!—(*aside*)—that's a puzzler. 'Gad, I'll describe my intended—Lady Falkland's young young friend. Nothing like drawing from nature.

BELTON (*aside*).—I'm on the rack! (*To him.*) Come—what is she like?

WILDGOOSE.—Figure to yourself an elegant young creature—about the middle height—

BELTON.—With auburn hair?

WILDGOOSE.—Yes—auburn hair. I see our tastes agree.

BELTON.—And her eyes?

WILDGOOSE.—Her eyes!—oh—the most languishing blue!

BELTON (*aside*).—Emma, by all that's dreadful!

WILDGOOSE.—By-the-bye, now I look again, I think her features resemble yours, Belton—you might be mistaken for brother and sister.

BELTON (*aside*).—Sdeath! Does he know her? What's to be done?—I'll go to Lamode immediately—Is he insulting me? (*To Wildgoose*) Hear me, sir! I shall expect to find you here on my return—you have injured me deeply, and I shall insist on the most ample satisfaction. (*Exit.*)

WILDGOOSE.—Satisfaction! What the devil does he mean? Why, supposing there had been a girl in the case—didn't he transfer her to me like so much stock, and for value received too?—Satisfaction?—stay—a duel! As sure a way as any of getting into public notice. A man may shed his blood in his country's service for twenty years together, and remain as neglected and unnoticed as if he'd never been born; but let him

kill his man in a club-house quarrel—ruin his friend first, and shoot him afterwards—and his name is up for ever.

Enter KNOWALL.

KNOWALL.—No news of her yet.

WILDGOOSE (*not noticing him*).—And as for the danger—people seldom hurt one another in duels nowadays. The first round produces (like a bad cheque) “no effects,”—the second—“fired in the air”—a sort of friendly salute—parties shake hands and all’s right again!—capital!—I am resolved to fight.

KNOWALL.—To fight! With whom? Why, the man’s mad.

WILDGOOSE (*still to himself*).—Then the felicitations of one’s friends next morning—“ah Tom!—glad to see you safe!—damned spirited I hear.” (*Seeing KNOWALL*) Ah Knowall, you come àpropos—Belton has behaved ill to me.

KNOWALL.—That’s nothing new; he often behaves ill to me.

WILDGOOSE.—Does he? Zounds! I’d have him out if I were you.

KNOWALL.—Psha! what signifies taking notice of him? He don’t mean any harm.

WILDGOOSE.—I won’t trouble you with the particulars of our dispute—(*aside*)—for I don’t know what it was about!—(*aloud*) I was warm, I own, and perhaps I may have said some unguarded things. At all events, I’m determined on fighting him.

KNOWALL (*aside*).—I should like of all things to see somebody shoot that Belton. (*To WILDGOOSE*.) You’re perfectly right, Wildgoose—his insolence is not to be borne.

WILDGOOSE.—I’ll write him a challenge directly—(*sits down and writes.*)—you shall carry it, Knowall.

KNOWALL (*aside*).—Well, I should like to have a hand in abolishing that horrid Belton. Wildgoose, you know my friendship for you—

WILDGOOSE (*aside*).—Yes—I heard it through the closet door, this morning.

KNOWALL.—And though I never interfere in other people's affairs, I have no objection to take your challenge for you.

WILDGOOSE.—Thank you—I'll do the same for you at any time.

KNOWALL (*aside*).—Not if I know it. (*To him.*) Oh, I offer you my services without any desire of having them returned—(*aside*)—at least in kind.

WILDGOOSE (*rising from the table*).—Let's see—how many paces?—one—two—three—(*measuring his steps*).

Enter IDLETON.

Ah, Idleton! I am under the disagreeable necessity of fighting with your friend Belton; but you know if a man suffers himself once to be affronted with impunity, every future action of his life invites insult and derision.

IDLETON.—That was just the doctrine of poor Tom Trigger—you knew Tom Trigger?

WILDGOOSE.—Perfectly well.

IDLETON.—He was shot through the heart in a duel this morning.

KNOWALL.—Ah! I knew that would be his end—I always said so.

WILDGOOSE.—Shot!—through the heart! The devil! Of course, they fired several times? Very scandalous of the seconds to suffer it.

IDLETON.—No, the first shot did it. I'll lend you my pistols, Wildgoose—they are the fellow pair to poor Trigger's. You'll have nothing to do but take one each—toss up for the first fire—and the thing's done—Belton never misses. But where is Falkland?—I want to see him.

KNOWALL.—Come, Wildgoose—I'm in haste to be gone—where's the challenge?

WILDGOOSE.—Shot through the heart!—A deuced ugly way of getting into public notice.

KNOWALL.—I'll deliver it to Belton on the spot, if you like, for here he comes.

WILDGOOSE.—Does he? Poor Tom Trigger! Idleton, you wish to see Sir Frederick Falkland, and I know you are in haste. I'll go with you to him—he's in the library—come along. (*Exit, pushing IDLETON out before him.*)

KNOWALL.—How savage Belton looks! There's bullets and blunderbusses in his very frowns. I believe I had best follow the example of my principal, and be his second in the retreat instead of the battle. (*Exit KNOWALL at one door as BELTON enters at the other.*)

BELTON.—No intelligence to be gained of this unhappy girl! She has not been heard of at Lamode's since she left there. Wildgoose gone, too! Wretch that I am! to have consigned her to infamy with my own hand! I must seek Wildgoose, and know the worst. Just at this moment, too, when my views on Lady Falkland promise the most un hoped-for triumph! This struggle is intolerable! The ecstasy of my newly-awakened hopes of success is scarcely sufficient to bear me up against the agony of my fears that a sister's honour has been sacrificed by my hand! The next half hour must decide both. (*Exit.*)

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE—*Sir Frederick Falkland's house.**Enter SIR FREDERICK.*

SIR FREDERICK.—How intolerable are the feelings of him who is at variance with the woman he loves! I cannot endure this any longer. I *must* be reconciled to her; and I flatter myself that will be no very difficult matter. I think I see my dear, disconsolate Caroline, numbering the tedious minutes of my absence by her sighs! Let me fly to her, and taste the highest bliss that love can bestow—the moment of reconciliation. (*Rings.*)

Enter Servant.

Is Lady Falkland in her boudoir?

SERVANT.—Her ladyship is not at home, Sir Frederick.

SIR FREDERICK.—Not at home!—and Miss Louisa?

SERVANT.—The ladies are both out, Sir Frederick.

SIR FREDERICK.—Together?

SERVANT.—No, Sir Frederick—her ladyship went out alone, in a hackney coach.

SIR FREDERICK.—Alone!—in a hackney coach! Do you know where? (*Aside.*) 'Sdeath! I shall expose myself to my servants.

SERVANT.—No, Sir—my lady herself gave the coachman his directions. (*Exit.*)

SIR FREDERICK.—Well—it is impossible I can pass over this! If Lady Falkland has forgotten what she owes to her own character, it is time I should remember what is due to mine. I'll write to her instantly (*sits down and writes*).—“Madam—your conduct—hackney coach—my honour and your own—the agonies I suffer—character lost for ever—perfect indifference I feel—FREDERICK FALKLAND.” Well—my mind is easier now. Stay—let me read it again—oh! (*writing*) “Postscript. A reconciliation is impossible—this is the last time I shall ever address you.” (*While sealing it he stops suddenly.*) No, no—this letter is too harsh—too abrupt—it will break her heart.—Besides, she may have some explanation to give me.

Enter Servant.

SERVANT.—A porter enquired if you were within, Sir Frederick, and left this note to be delivered to you instantly. (*Exit.*)

SIR FREDERICK.—An unknown hand (*breaking the seal and reading*). “Tremble for your honour. Lady Falkland”—good heavens!—what's this?—“Lady Falkland will be at Mrs Lamode's in an hour, to meet the perfidious Belton. Follow her thither; but dissemble; and let no provocation tempt you to revenge till you receive such proof of his falsehood as I alone can give you. My assistance depends on your conforming to these instructions.—*The deserted Leonora.*” Villain! villain!—but I have him in the toils! Ungrateful woman! Yet the fault is all my own. Fool that I was to affect that indifference which is the common bane of husbands. Can I complain of her heart for seeking other companionship, when my seeming indifference has driven the unhappy wanderer from its home. What's to be done?—I'll seek Belton instantly. This meeting may be prevented—or the charge may be a groundless one. At least let me observe the caution it enjoins. (*Exit*).

Scene changes to Belton's house.—Enter BELTON and MRS LAMODE, meeting.

MRS LAMODE.—Your servant, Mr Belton. I am sorry I was not at home when you called at my house. I find you made particular enquiries about the young thing I sent you this morning. It's very extraordinary that she has not returned to me.

BELTON (*eagerly*).—What can have become of her?—she must be sought for instantly.

MRS LAMODE.—But you say you have not seen her. Why should you be so interested about her?

BELTON (*aside*).—What's to be done? How to proceed?—should she suspect!—all may depend on a few moments.

MRS LAMODE.—But I have good news for you, Mr Belton, on a more important matter.

BELTON.—Good news—from whom?

MRS LAMODE.—Read that (*giving him a letter*).

BELTON.—Madame Beaumonde's hand! (*reads*). Transporting intelligence! She tells me she has persuaded Lady Falkland to accompany her to your house this evening, under pretence of choosing some articles of dress—that she expects me in an hour—and what is more, that Lady Falkland expects me. Why, thou dear dispenser of gauze and gallantry, this is news indeed. How shall I express my gratitude?

MRS LAMODE.—By giving at the same time a proof of your taste. I have the loveliest Chantilly veil below stairs! I'll run and fetch it while you are writing an answer to that note. (*Aside*.) There's nothing like striking a bargain with a man while he's in love. (*Exit*.)

BELTON (*rings, and enter Servant*).—Set candles in the library. (*Exit Servant*.) I'll answer this charming epistle at once. Falkland's folly has done more for me in one day than months of my own skill and assiduity could have effected. How little reason would men of gallantry have to boast of

success among married women, if husbands were not kind enough, by their own bad generalship, to assist us in the conquest. (*Exit.*)

Enter SIR FREDERICK FALKLAND at the other door, with a Servant.

SIR FREDERICK.—Your master *is* within. Say I insist on seeing him, and shall wait here till he comes. (*Exit Servant.*) But let me be calm—there may be some error still.

Enter MRS LAMODE, with a veil in her hand. She speaks as she enters without seeing SIR FREDERICK.

MRS LAMODE.—Here's the veil—cheap at five-and-twenty guineas, I assure you. Lady Falkland particularly admires it!

SIR FREDERICK.—And has sent you to me?

MRS LAMODE (*startled*).—To you, sir? I have not the honour of knowing you. I thought Mr Belton was here.

SIR FREDERICK (*aside*).—So! a messenger from my wife to Belton! There's an end of all doubt. (*To her.*) Where is Lady Falkland?

MRS LAMODE.—Lady Falkland did I say, sir?—what was I thinking of?

SIR FREDERICK.—I'll tell you—you were thinking of delivering a message from Lady Falkland, who is to be by appointment at Mrs Lamode's this evening, to meet Mr Belton. Come, come—you need not conceal anything from me.

MRS LAMODE.—Why really, sir, there seems nothing left for me to conceal. You appear to know the whole affair as well as I do.

SIR FREDERICK.—I presume you are Mrs Lamode?

MRS LAMODE.—The same, sir, at your service, and you are—

SIR FREDERICK.—A particular friend of Mr Belton's.

MRS LAMODE.—And like most “particular friends,” his

rival with the woman he loves, if I may judge by your agitation at the mention of Lady Falkland's name.

SIR FREDERICK.—Well, I won't deny that I have been his successful rival there, but that's all over. And now tell me what has produced this meeting between Lady Falkland and Mr Belton ?

MRS LAMODE.—Oh! the old story, sir—she and her fool of a husband have had a quarrel.

SIR FREDERICK.—I'm answered !

MRS LAMODE.—You seem, sir, to be a gentleman who understands these little matters ; and as you say your own affair with the lady is at an end, pray tell me, as a friend of Mr Belton's, how you think he is most likely to succeed in making an impression on Lady Falkland's heart ?

SIR FREDERICK (*aside*).—A pretty question to her husband !

MRS LAMODE.—Some ladies, you know, sir, refuse to make a *faux pas* except according to the strictest rules of "sentiment ;" while others think there is no surer proof of having conquered a man's heart than that of gaining the command of his purse.

SIR FREDERICK.—Lady Falkland has changed greatly since I first knew her, but I believe "Love for Love" is still her motto.

MRS LAMODE.—And may I ask, sir, if Mr Belton knows of your former intimacy with this lady ?

SIR FREDERICK.—Not a word of it—so you must be silent as the grave on that point. Nor must he know that I suspect his attachment.

MRS LAMODE.—Oh, sir, I observe the strictest secrecy on these occasions. If it were his own wife he never should have heard of it from me ; and but for this accident, even you, sir—but hush ! he's here !

Enter BELTON, who starts at seeing SIR FREDERICK.

SIR FREDERICK.—Belton, you seem surprised at seeing me and your friend, Mrs Lamode, so well together.

BELTON (*confused*).—Rather surprised, I confess.

SIR FREDERICK.—You must find her a very convenient acquaintance.

BELTON.—Yes, I—I own it.

SIR FREDERICK (*aside to him*).—I too hope to avail myself of her services—but (for reasons that you may guess) I must beg you to conceal my name.

BELTON (*aside*).—She does not know it then? I breathe again!

MRS LAMODE.—Well, Mr Belton, where is this note? Why, if the lady had sent me to *her husband*, I should not have had longer to wait for an answer. (BELTON *gives her the note*.)

SIR FREDERICK.—A married woman, then?

MRS LAMODE.—Oh, yes!—I dare say you know the husband. (*Aside to SIR FREDERICK*.) Mr Belton little thinks how you laugh at him in your sleeve! (*Aloud*.) A man of consideration too, I assure you.

BELTON (*aside*).—This woman's cursed tongue will spoil all!—(*making signs to her to be silent*.)

SIR FREDERICK (*to BELTON*).—Some silly dupe, I suppose, whom you gull with professions of friendship! But are you sure he don't suspect you?

BELTON.—Confident of it. I own I once had doubts on the point; but at this moment they are entirely removed.

MRS LAMODE.—Oh! no fear of keeping the husband in the dark whilst I have the management of the business. Ha! ha! Well, 'tis really cruel to laugh at a poor devil in such a situation; but I vow I can't help it. (*Laughs*.)

SIR FREDERICK (*aside*).—I must either laugh myself, or go distracted.

BELTON (*to Sir Frederick*).—When did you see our friend, Lady Falkland? (*Aside to him*.) Lamode will never suspect who you are after that question—(*aside to himself*)—at least, if she does it will give her a hint to be silent.

SIR FREDERICK.—Lady Falkland?—Oh—Mrs Lamode can tell you more of her than I can. I believe Lady Falkland is a customer of her's.

MRS LAMODE.—Why yes, sir—but in my business—

BELTON (*interrupting her*).—But you are forgetting your business, Mrs Lamode, which just at present is to carry my note to its destination.

MRS LAMODE.—But, sir—one word—

BELTON.—Not a syllable. (*Aside*.) She'll discover all if I don't get rid of her.

MRS LAMODE.—But the Chantilly veil—

BELTON.—I'll take it.

MRS LAMODE.—I have one still handsomer at home.

BELTON.—Well, I'll take that too—I'll take your whole stock in trade—your young ladies—yourself—all at your own price—if you will but go now—(*pushes her out*.) Well, Sir Frederick, after what you have heard to-night, I suppose I shall not be able to make you jealous of me. I shall lose my wager! But you must excuse me now. You see my position! My compliments to Lady Falkland. Let me see you before you leave town.

SIR FREDERICK (*significantly and half aside as he goes out*).—You shall see me very soon, depend upon it—and when you least expect it.

BELTON.—That's well over—and now let me once more seek this unhappy sister. (*Exeunt different ways.*)

SCENE—*Changes to Wildgoose's house.*

Enter WILDGOOSE and FRANK.

FRANK.—Yes, sir, Mr Belton has been here again, about the

young lady from the country. The very mention of her seems to drive him beside himself.

WILDGOOSE.—What the deuce shall I do? Since I've found out that I'm so much in love I don't fancy fighting. I've nothing left for it but to put my new project into execution at once.

FRANK.—What, sir, shoot yourself, to avoid the chance of somebody else shooting you?

WILDGOOSE.—What, you don't think killing oneself an act of heroism? What do you say to Cato and Curtius?

FRANK.—I don't know anything about those gentlemen, sir; but I should hardly think they would have been celebrated as heroes, if, like most fashionable felo-de-ses, they had sneaked out of the world to cheat their creditors. The act of suicide is now-a-days only a genteel substitute for the act of insolvency.

WILDGOOSE.—Well—you know I have no intention of making myself immortal that way at present. I mean to confine myself to an "attempt" merely. But is everything properly arranged with an eye to newspaper effect, eh Frank? for if we manage it well, I think this attempt on my own life may be the making of me.

FRANK.—Why, sir, if we are to credit the police reports, to attempt to kill one's self now-a-days seems a capital mode of getting one's living.

WILDGOOSE.—Well—is everything ready as we settled it?

FRANK.—All ready, sir. I've charged your pistols with paper bullets, and prepared your hat as you directed me; and there's the *Essay against the Immortality of the Soul*, sir (*pointing to table*).

WILDGOOSE.—Let me see—then after I've taken leave of my friends, I fire my first pistol, which misses me, and the ball goes through my hat?

FRANK.—Yes, sir (*fetching the hat*). Here is the hole that the bullet is to make.

WILDGOOSE.—Ay—that'll do very well—though I had rather it had been a little larger—and how stupid!—why, you've made the hole on the wrong side! The newspaper wags will say the attempt was a *left-handed* one (*putting the hat on, and pointing the pistol, to show that the hole ought to have been on the right side*).

FRANK.—Upon hearing the report, Thomas (whom I shall post in the next room to watch you) is to rush in and wrench the second pistol from your hand before you can fire it.

WILDGOOSE.—Well—that's all right, then. But I must have pen and ink, and a bottle of wine before me. I have observed, Frank, that people generally drink and write before they shoot themselves.

FRANK.—Why, sir, I thought you had already written all the notes that are to be delivered after your decease. But here is Thomas, come to receive his instructions.

WILDGOOSE.—Desire him to be quick in his motions—it will be deucedly awkward if I should be obliged to fire twice before he comes to my assistance. One can't very well miss oneself twice, you know. But stop—how are we to ensure the thing being properly known!

FRANK.—Oh, send for Mr Knowall, sir, and confide it to him as a profound secret, and half the town will know it by to-morrow morning.

Enter the Groom, drunk. WILDGOOSE goes to the bottom of the stage and walks, reading a book.

Why, Thomas, good liquor seems to have got the whip-hand of you. Why you are tipsy.

THOMAS.—I tipsy! Come—I like that—I, who abominate all kinds of drinking—

FRANK.—Except hard drinking. Well, Thomas, you remember I told you this evening that your master seems to be a little disordered in his head.

THOMAS.—Ah—he looks as if he was tipsy. It's a sad failing where people are so inclined.

FRANK.—Between you and me, Thomas, I'm afraid he thinks of destroying himself.

THOMAS.—Poor gentleman! Ah, he's reading—that looks bad. I always hated reading from a child.

FRANK.—Now I want you to be upon the watch in the next room; and if you should hear a pistol go off, run immediately to his assistance.

THOMAS.—That I will, as fast as my legs can carry me (*staggering*). But I say, Master Frank, pay me my wages first.

FRANK.—What does the man mean?

THOMAS.—Let master make away with himself as much as he likes—but he has no right to make away with another man's property. I'll have my wages.

Enter Servant.

SERVANT.—Mr Idleton, Sir.

WILDGOOSE.—Why, Frank, here's Idleton come already. Well—show him up. (*Exit Servant.*)

THOMAS.—I'm sure his honour would pay me my wages directly, if he was sober.

FRANK.—Be quiet!

THOMAS.—Oh, but I will have my wages.

FRANK.—Well, well—you shall. I'll pay you in the next room. (*Exit, pushing the Groom out.*)

Enter IDLETON.

IDLETON.—Why, Wildgoose, what the devil made you send for me in such a hurry?—you know how I hate to be hurried. But I suppose I can guess the occasion.

WILDGOOSE (*in a mock-melancholy tone*).—Perhaps it is the last time I may ever give you trouble, my dear friend.

IDLETON.—I hope it is—I don't like trouble. I've brought my pistols, for I think you said you were going to fight with somebody (*lays the pistols on the table*).

Enter FRANK.

FRANK.—Sir Harry Headlong and Mr Knowall, Sir.

Enter SIR HARRY HEADLONG and KNOWALL.

KNOWALL.—Ah! how are you both? Why, Wildgoose, what's the matter? You look as melancholy—

SIR HARRY.—Why, Tom, what's come to you? You look deucedly like a disinherited man! I'll bet you fifty to forty I name your grievance. The old hunks has kicked the bucket, and cut you off with a shilling, eh?

WILDGOOSE.—Don't jest with death, Headlong. The grave's a serious matter.

SIR HARRY.—Well—but you're not dead yet, so what is it? Your ruin happened yesterday, so it can't be *that*.

WILDGOOSE.—I think you must all of you have observed my being very dull lately.

IDLETON.—Not more so than usual.

SIR HARRY.—Dull—dam'me—you were always as dull as prayer-time at college; but now—why, I'd match you against my old aunt Mouser on a Sunday morning just after Meeting!

WILDGOOSE.—The fact is, I begin to agree with certain philosophers in their opinion of life—it's not worth the keeping. I've just been reading this unanswerable defence of self-destruction. A man can hardly bear to live till he gets to the end of it.

KNOWALL (*looking at the title-page*).—Ah! I happened to know the author—he died of a complication of disorders the other day, after spending half his fortune on quacks who promised him long life.

SIR HARRY.—Ha! ha! ha!—Like doctors and direction posts—pointing out the road he never meant to go himself!

WILDGOOSE (*in a prosing puritanical tone*).—Nay, my friends—but consult your own experience and feelings—every day presents us with the same round of the same follies—

SIR HARRY.—Which same follies are devilish entertaining.

WILDGOOSE (*in the same tone*).—We eat, drink, and sleep—

KNOWALL.—Of course we do. What can we do better?

WILDGOOSE (*the same*).—We go to bed at night and rise in the morning—

IDLETON.—I generally go to bed in the morning and get up at night.

WILDGOOSE.—In short, I have run the whole career of dissipation, and am sick of it all; and when that's the case, I don't see what a man of spirit can do but shoot himself. So I mean to conclude my round of follies—of which I heartily repent—

SIR HARRY.—With the greatest folly of all, and of which you can't repent. Talking of follies, Tom—I saw Dick Highover's new turn-out to-day—it's about the spiciest thing going.

WILDGOOSE (*gaily and off his guard*).—Yes, I mean to have one exactly like it!

KNOWALL.—What!—to be buried in? (*Aside.*) I smoke this business.

WILDGOOSE (*resuming his former tone*).—Ah! my thoughts wander sadly! But tell me, can either of you say anything to dissuade me from my resolution?

IDLETON.—I can't. Not but I've heard strong arguments against killing one's self; but I forget them all;—though now I think of it, it must save a man a vast deal of trouble. But then again it's hardly worth the trouble of doing it—one's sure to die of one's own accord, you know, some time or other.

SIR HARRY.—Die!—phoo!—what's the good of dying? Life's the thing! Kill yourself?—nonsense! Come, Tom,

I'll bet you five to one (ponies or hundreds, which you like) that you don't kill yourself once within an hour—play or pay.
—Is it a bet?

WILDGOOSE.—What say you, Knowall? But don't attempt to dissuade me.

KNOWALL.—Not I, indeed!—I admire your spirit. (*Aside.*) It's a hoax, I'll be sworn.

WILDGOOSE.—What is life? (*IDLETON plays with the pistols—WILDGOOSE is alarmed.*) I say, Idleton, take care what you're about—you may do one a mischief.

KNOWALL (*taking up the pistols*).—Here—take them yourself. You may depend upon it they'll do your business effectually. Headlong, just go and see that the coast's clear, that he may not be interrupted.

SIR HARRY.—Well, if he's determined on it—(*going to each of the doors*)—But I say, Tom, be quick about it, will you, for I promised to meet Frolick at Crockford's in half an hour, for a match at billiards, and I should like to see the last of you for old acquaintance sake.

KNOWALL (*having taken the pistols in his hands*).—Come, how do you mean to do it? Here—(*pointing one of the pistols towards WILDGOOSE in handing it to him.*)

WILDGOOSE.—Take care!—what the devil are you going to do?

KNOWALL.—Why, inspired by the true Roman friendship, I prefer your honour to your life. I wish you could have consented to live. But as you say you can't, and as your word is pledged, why fire away! (*During this speech FRANK comes in and gives a letter to WILDGOOSE—WILDGOOSE reads the letter and then comes forward.*)

WILDGOOSE.—Gentlemen, I'm sorry to say I sha'n't be able to carry out my project to-night—I have just been reminded of a particular engagement that—

KNOWALL.—Oh! we'll make your apologies—

WILDGOOSE.—But I tell you I've recollected an appointment with a lady—the very lady, Knowall, that you saw me talking with at Sir Frederick Falkland's.

KNOWALL.—Psha! a mere excuse—

Enter THOMAS.

THOMAS.—It's very late, your honour—indeed you had better not shoot yourself to-night—do it the first thing in the morning. A nap will be of service to both of us. (FRANK *persuades THOMAS to go out.*)

KNOWALL.—Heyday, Wildgoose!—why, your intention seems to be universally known—it was to have been a “public execution,” eh? You meant to “make an example” of yourself!

WILDGOOSE.—Sir, I don't understand this sneering—I shall insist—

IDLETON.—Nay, Wildgoose, one at a time—you know you are engaged to fight Belton.

SIR HARRY.—The deuce he is! Why—ay—now this is something like! A duel!—there's some sense in that! (*Makes motions as if firing—first to one side, then the other.*) One winged—the other riddled!—there's life in that!—that's what I like!

KNOWALL.—Yes, I expect Belton here every minute.

WILDGOOSE (*aside*).—The devil you do!—then I must be off. Really, gentlemen, I'm sorry to disappoint you; but you wouldn't have me kill myself just when a lady's waiting for me. (*Exit WILDGOOSE.*)

KNOWALL.—Ha! ha! ha! I knew how it was. Frank, is this a real or pretended engagement of your master's?

FRANK.—I know, sir, he has received a note respecting a lady he met at Sir Frederick Falkland's, and he is going to meet her at Mrs Lamode's, the milliner's, this evening.

KNOWALL.—Eh? Why, what the deuce can be in the wind

now? Mrs Lamode lives close by—I know her—let's go and see what will be the end of the affair.

IDLETON.—What's the use? When a woman agrees to meet a male friend at her milliner's, one may easily tell what will be the end of the affair.

SIR HARRY.—Well, I'm off to Crooky's. If Wildgoose really means to get rid of himself, send for me, will you? I should like to see the last of him, poor fellow! (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE—*Mrs Lamode's.*

Enter BELTON and a Servant.

BELTON.—Tell Mrs Lamode I am here, and very impatient to see her. (*Exit Servant.*) Thanks to my usual good fortune, I got rid of Falkland pretty well. No fear of any impertinent intruders here.

Re-enter Servant.

SERVANT.—A note for you, sir—your servant said he was directed to forward it to you immediately.

BELTON.—Wildgoose's handwriting—a challenge, I suppose (*reads*). “Dear Belton”—a civil beginning for a “hostile message!”—(*reads*)—um—um—“before you receive this I shall be no more.—THOMAS WILDGOOSE.”—A regular dead man's epistle—the form as invariable as that of an incendiary letter—“put five pound in a sartin place.” But here's a postscript—“If I had lived, I certainly would have given you satisfaction.” Well, as he's dead—

Enter WILDGOOSE.

WILDGOOSE.—Bless me, Belton, I didn't expect to meet you here.

BELTON.—Nor I you!—but you had much better go home and be buried quietly, than walk about after your decease, to frighten people in this manner.

WILDGOOSE.—Oh—you've received my letter? Why, the fact is, I did intend to commit the rash act; but I'm going to be married instead.

BELTON (*more seriously*).—Yes, I mean you shall be married. I have fixed upon a wife for you.

WILDGOOSE.—You're very good, but I'm engaged to one already. You would not have me take two at a time. I might as well shoot myself as that.

BELTON.—You may do that after marriage if you like; but married you must be, and to a lady of my choosing; the young lady with whom you supplied my place to-day.

WILDGOOSE.—Ha! ha! ha!—a mere ideal young lady, that! She's like a poet's muse—all the town may make love to her without being jealous of each other.

BELTON.—No trifling, sir!

WILDGOOSE.—Well, to convince you that I'm in earnest, the lady I described to you is the very person I am to meet here by appointment this evening. Look—here's her note (*showing a letter to BELTON*).

BELTON (*aside*).—My sister's hand! (*Aloud.*) Look ye, sir, if you dare thus to trifle with me—that letter—

WILDGOOSE (*aside*).—Why, what's the matter with him now? He seems very savage.

Enter SIR FREDERICK FALKLAND.

SIR FREDERICK.—Mr Wildgoose, allow me to request your absence.

WILDGOOSE.—With a great deal of pleasure, Sir Frederick—no apologies, pray. Belton, I'll see you presently. I'm only going to speak a word to the writer of that letter. (*Exit.*)

SIR FREDERICK.—Mr Belton, we must have some conversation on a subject which nearly concerns my honour and happiness.

BELTON.—My dear Sir Frederick, I'm very proud of your

confidence; but really the time and place are rather *mal à propos* for the purpose.

SIR FREDERICK.—The most fitting I could have chosen.

BELTON.—My dear Falkland, you must admit that there are occasions when a man must be allowed to prefer his own happiness to that of his best friend.

SIR FREDERICK.—So I find, indeed!

BELTON.—You have forgotten that I am here by the appointment of a lady.

SIR FREDERICK (*half aside*).—Would to heaven I could forget it!—the remembrance strikes a dagger to my soul.

Enter MRS LAMODE.

(*To her.*) Where is Lady Falkland?

MRS LAMODE.—Hush, sir! hush!—you'll discover the whole affair.

SIR FREDERICK.—I must see her instantly.

MRS LAMODE.—*You* see her? Why, I understood she came to meet Mr Belton. But it's no business of mine. I presume the lady herself knows who she came to meet—so I'll fetch her. (*Exit.*)

SIR FREDERICK.—Well, sir—what have you to say to this?

BELTON.—Say? Why, really I think the less that is said about it the better.

SIR FREDERICK.—True, sir—words are superfluous—therefore defend yourself (*offering pistols, which he draws from his pocket*).

BELTON.—First, Sir Frederick, you must be so good as to inform me what we are to fight about.

SIR FREDERICK.—What! have you not injured me in the most deadly manner?—deprived me of the affections of the woman I adored? Life is insupportable to me, and—

BELTON.—And therefore you wish to get rid of it?—a good

reason enough for *your* wishing to fight, but it don't apply to my case at all.

SIR FREDERICK.—'Sdeath, sir!

BELTON.—Nay, Sir Frederick Falkland—restrain your anger. If you choose to throw away your wife's heart, you have no right to quarrel with me for picking it up.

SIR FREDERICK.—How I feel the reproach! It almost unmans me. Oh Caroline! Could she but have known that at the very moment when my seeming indifference piqued and offended her, my soul was wrung by the keenest pangs of jealousy—that under the unruffled surface were concealed the fatal rocks on which my happiness is wrecked—but the thought is madness!—(*turning fiercely upon BELTON*)—Vile as you are, sir, let me not be compelled to brand you with the name of coward (*again offering pistols*). Once more, I say, defend yourself.

BELTON (*aside*).—This is more than I bargained for. (*To him*.) Why, look-ye, Sir Frederick Falkland—it is not my way to stake my life on this kind of extemporaneous tilting with a madman. At a proper time and place I shall know how to answer you. At present—

SIR FREDERICK.—Dastard!

BELTON.—You deal in hard words! Why, you should thank me for being chary of my life, if only from a regard to Lady Falkland.

SIR FREDERICK.—Insulting villain!—dare you avow—

BELTON.—That I am here by Lady Falkland's appointment.

SIR FREDERICK.—Liar! I'll not believe it. Though my folly and your villainy may have estranged her heart from me, an angel's tongue should not persuade me to admit a thought dishonourable to her virtue.

BELTON.—Ha! ha! ha!—a most convenient husband!—Dream on, sir, whilst I enjoy that “waking bliss” which awaits me.

SIR FREDERICK.—Villain!—liar!—though the act bring certain death upon me, thus—*(as he points a pistol at BELTON and is about to fire, LADY FALKLAND rushes out of an adjoining room and throws herself into his arms.)*

LADY FALKLAND.—Frederick!—my life!—my husband!

SIR FREDERICK (*starting back*).—Caroline!—what can this mean?—where do I find you?

Enter LOUISA.

LOUISA.—In very good company, my dear brother—my presence—

SIR FREDERICK.—Should remove every doubt—but this place—this man?—what am I to think?

LOUISA.—Why, that when Mr Belton came here to meet my sister, he little expected to find a family party assembled to greet him.

SIR FREDERICK.—How have I been tortured! and how deservedly! But tell me, Caroline, was this your scheme?

LADY FALKLAND.—No, indeed, my dear Frederick—it is to this lady we owe the inestimable blessing of knowing that we are still beloved by each other.

Enter MADAME BEAUMONDE.

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—You see before you, Sir Frederick, “The forsaken Leonora,” your correspondent of this evening. But I will not upbraid Mr Belton with his inconstancy! I can easily forgive him, since he has enabled me to succeed in the most difficult and delicate of all tasks—that of reconciling the *causeless* differences of a married couple.

LOUISA.—But though *you* forgive Mr Belton for his inconstancy, I have another lady to introduce to him whom he has also forsaken—basely, cruelly forsaken.

Enter EMMA BELTON, led in by WILDGOOSE.

BELTON.—My sister here !

WILDGOOSE.—I suppose you are not at leisure to fight at present, Belton—you seem to have too much business on your hands.

Enter SIR HARRY HEADLONG, IDLETON, and KNOWALL.

SIR HARRY.—Well, Tom, which is it to be—Death or marriage?—a wife or a bullet? I couldn't help coming to take leave of you in either case. No more “life,” then, you know ! No more fun, old fellow !

KNOWALL.—Belton, you'll be laughed at most delightfully. You must expect no more quarter than a wasp finds in a bee-hive.

IDLETON.—For my part, I'll relate the story everywhere—that is, what I can remember of it; and as everybody will know it before to-morrow night, if I should happen to make a few blunders, there'll be plenty of people to set me right.

BELTON.—This is too much ! I could have out-faced the silly taunts of the women, and laughed at the empty blustering of the husband ; but, like the sick lion, to be kicked at by asses !—I can't stand that. Sir Frederick Falkland, you know where I am to be found. (*Exit.*)

SIR FREDERICK.—Scoundrel ! (*Then to his wife.*) How shall I atone for my follies, Caroline ?—how speak my shame, yet my delight ?

MADAME BEAUMONDE.—There are occasions, Sir Frederick Falkland, for which words were not made. But let me say for both of you, what I hope by this time you have both discovered for yourselves—that, next to a causeless jealousy, the most mischievous feeling which can prevail between a married pair is that of a cold or careless indifference.

LOUISA.—And let me add, that an *affection* of indiffer-

ence is even more dangerous than the reality ; for, depend upon it, when once we learn to feel ashamed of our good qualities, it will not be long before we grow vain of our bad ones.

WILDGOOSE.—I too must be allowed to confess my follies, as the first step towards abandoning them—which I mean to do immediately, if only for the singularity of the thing ! *That*, at all events, will make me talked of—and I don't care if 'tis for the last time ;—though I *should* like to be remarked for the singular happiness I mean to enjoy, and hope to confer, as this lady's husband.

SIR HARRY.—“Happiness” and “husband!” What a conjunction ! Something like the comfort of a strait waistcoat, or the liberty of a spunging house !

SIR FREDERICK.—For my part, from the present moment I abjure for ever the ungenerous folly of pretending to love my wife less than I feel she deserves.

LADY FALKLAND.—And I the childish affectation of seeming to estimate that love at less than the price of my whole heart.

MADAME BEAUMONDE (*to the audience*).—And our friends here may take a widow's word for it, that through all the varied scenes of the Comedy of Real Life, none but the fools will laugh when told that their boasted “single blessedness” would be but a faint foretaste of married bliss, if the lords of the creation would only learn to play the part of Husband at once wisely and kindly.

(*Curtain falls.*)

NOTE.—(*See Preface, page v.*)

THE practice of citing critical opinions in favour of literary works has been sanctioned, either avowedly or tacitly, by all the most distinguished writers of our day; and it will scarcely be denied that the reasons for this practice, whatever they may be, speak more strongly in behalf of such citations when they proceed from sources at once avowed and authoritative, than when they are anonymous, and *may be* partial.

Some years ago I was advised by a literary friend who had read this Comedy, and had a life-long experience in such matters, to obtain, if possible, the unbiassed opinion upon it of the late Frederick Reynolds, who, I was assured, was looked upon in the theatrical world as, practically, the best living judge of a Comedy. Acting on this suggestion, the Comedy was ostensibly submitted (through the medium of a mutual friend) to Mr Alfred Bunn, at that time lessee of Drury Lane Theatre,—Mr Frederick Reynolds being his “Reader.” In pursuance of the same object—that, namely, of satisfying myself whether or not the Comedy was worthy of public attention—it was afterwards submitted to two highly popular writers, both of them among the most successful of their time in delineating in a Narrative form the Comedy of Actual Life. I allude to the accomplished author of “Tremaine,” “De Vere,” &c. (Mr Plumer Ward), and the author of the famous “Rejected Addresses,” “Brambletye House,” &c. (Mr Horace Smith). Of the four gentlemen above-named, three were personally unknown to the writers of this Comedy, and had no possible means of even guessing as to its authorship; and the fourth (Mr Plumer Ward), though a dear and revered friend of one of its writers, was too true to that title to abstain from telling his friend the truth, when seriously urged to do so—as he was in this instance. It is the favourable criticisms of these gentlemen, and the urgent and repeated remonstrances of the last-named of them, that have at length caused this Comedy partially to see the light.

From a Letter of the late Richard Peake.

“UNIVERSITY STREET, FEB. 2, 1836.

“MY DEAR PATMORE,—I have seen Fred. Reynolds’s *written* opinion on the Comedy. He is in raptures with the sparkling dialogue, which

he declares to be equal to Congreve and Sheridan. . . . His opinion, on the whole, was highly favourable. Bunn is looking at the Comedy with a Manager's eye. . . . Yours truly,

“R. B. PEAKE.”

From a Letter of Mr Alfred Bunn.

“MY DEAR PEAKE,—I return you the Comedy. It is admirably written, and possesses ingredients calculated to revive the days that are past.”

Mr Bunn's letter concludes with recommending “some more striking effect in the Fourth Act, and some pruning of the dialogue—though it be too good to be spared.* Yours truly,

“ALFRED BUNN.”

Mr Horace Smith sums up a careful estimate of the Comedy in the following words. The Italics are his own.

“I have no difficulty whatever in declaring that, *when measured by the very best works of a similar class that I have either seen or read*, it seems to me to be one of those genuine and legitimate Comedies that ought to command a great and undoubted success. Its merits are of a high order—sterling—indisputable.

“OCTOBER 6, 1838.

H. S.”

Mr Plumer Ward's letter consists chiefly of hints and suggestions on minute details, almost all of which have since been adopted, with infinite benefit to the work. The following are the only passages that have a general application :

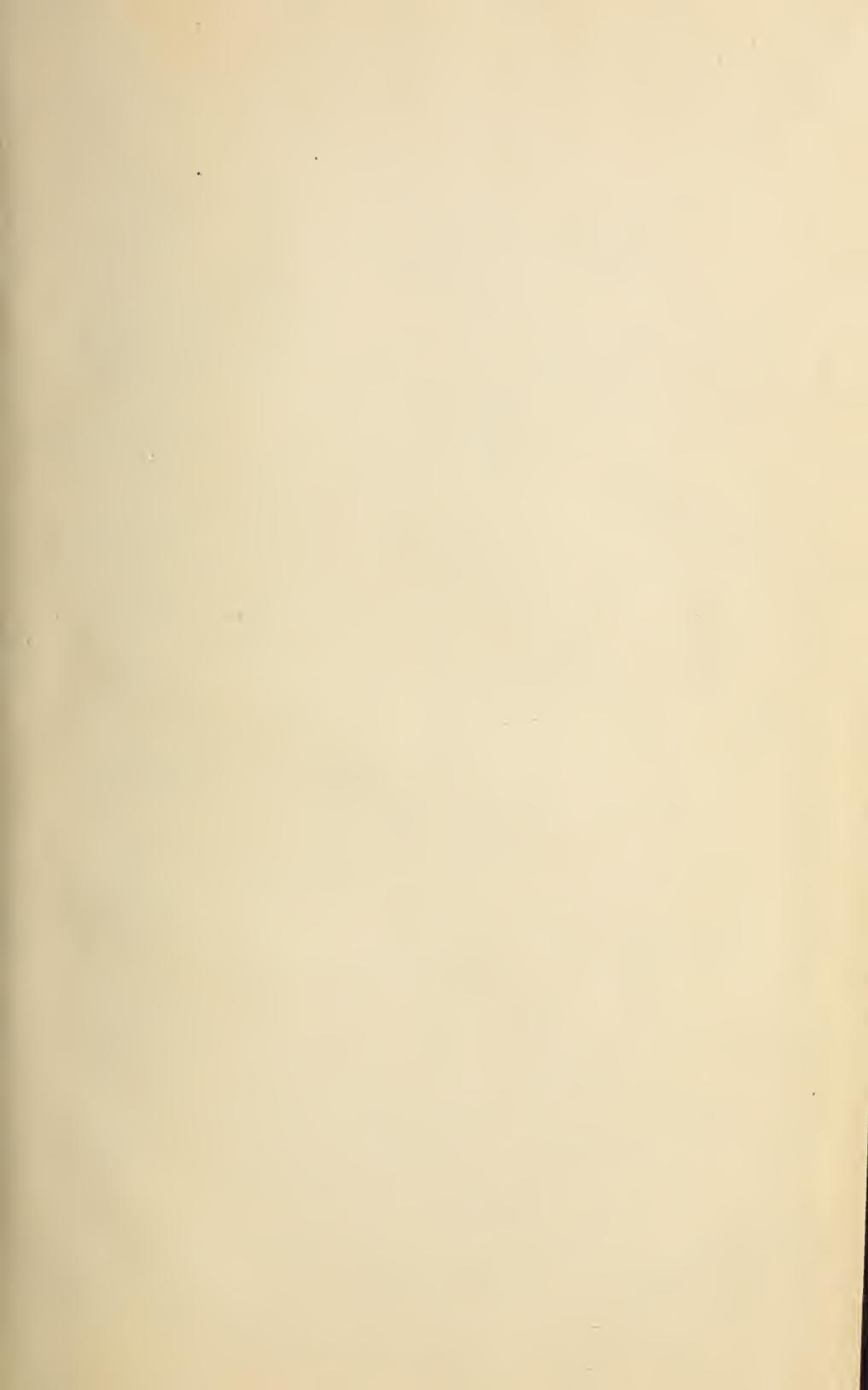
“CHESTERFIELD STREET, MARCH 22, 1838.

“DEAR PATMORE,—I have read the Play twice, and parts of it three times over. . . . The wit, repartee, equivoque, and asides remind me *pointedly* of Congreve, Vanburgh, and even Sheridan—to whom they are scarcely inferior. WILDGOOSE, KNOWALL, ISSACHAR, HEADLONG, and IDLETON are all admirable, and the first and last I think very original. If well acted I am sure they would keep the house in a roar. The fable, too, is full of interest, and I think by no means common.” . . . [The letter concludes as follows:] “There! I think I have tried your sincerity when you told me to be honest. And yet if you knew how very much I like the Play, you would not be angry. I want the interest to be as perfect as the humour, and then I think it will be a bijoux: and so no more—for I think I never wrote so long a letter in my life. Always yours,

“R. P. W.”

* These recommendations have been partially carried out.





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